



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600078407W





# MILDRINGTON

## THE BARRISTER.

A ROMANCE.

---

Das Wasser rauscht', das Wasser schwall  
Neh't' ihm den nackten Fuß ;  
Sein Herz wuchs ihm so sehnuchtsvoll,  
Wie bei der Liebsten Gruß.  
Sie sprach zu ihm, sie sang zu ihm ;  
Da war's um ihn gescheh'n :  
Halb zog sie ihn, halb sank er hin  
Und ward nicht mehr geseh'n.—Goethe.

The waters rush, the waters roll,  
About his naked feet they move ;  
An aching longing fills his soul,  
As when we look on her we love. *U*  
She sings to him, she speaks to him ;  
Alas, he feels that all is o'er.  
She drags him down, his senses swim :  
The fisherman is seen no more !  
GOETHE,—MAUGAN'S TRANSLATION.

IN TWO VOLS.—VOL. I.

LONDON:  
SAUNDERS, OTLEY, AND CO.,  
66, BROOK STREET, HANOVER SQUARE.

1863.

250. l. 128.



JOHN CHILDS AND SON, PRINTERS.

**INSCRIBED**

**WITH MUCH REGARD**

**TO**

**JOSEPH SHERIDAN LE FANU.**





# MILDRINGTON THE BARRISTER:

## A ROMANCE OF TWO SYRENS.

---

Das Wasser rauscht', das Wasser schwoll  
Reht' ihm den nackten Fuß ;  
Sein Herz wuchs ihm so sehnuchtsvoll,  
Wie bei der Liebsten Gruß.  
Sie sprach zu ihm, sie sang zu ihm ;  
Da war's um ihn gescheh'n :  
Halb zog sie ihn, halb sank er hin  
Und ward nicht mehr geseh'n.—Goethe.

---

### PART I.

#### I. BEFORE THE PIECE BEGINS.

THE divine Heros de Roman—the traditional perfect man, enjoying a complete and guaranteed immunity from human weaknesses, has long since been laid up in his family vault. The Frankensteins of romance have given over manufacturing such impeccable models; and the great public outside are fatigued, not with hear-

ing Aristides simply called Just, which would be reasonable and not to be objected to, but at having him shaped into something of the divinity. A daily experience gives the lie very forcibly to this complacent gospel. Through that thick social "formation" of relations, friends, and acquaintances runs the crooked, waving line—sometimes broad, sometimes narrow—of envies, animosities, jealousies, backbitings, humours, whims ; in the lottery, wives find that they have not drawn Bayards or St Francis ; nor will lovers discover that they have flung themselves at the feet of heavenly virgins, born without even the original sin. The best of us, alack ! are not exquisitely logical in our moods and fancies ; but will chide sourly what pleased us yesterday, and be enthusiastic over what we scowled at an hour back ; why then should the romance mechanic set himself to tinkering up these unfaithful paragons, these false gods of fiction, who live through their term of chapters, and never sin ; for whom we can

have no true sympathy, love, and but a cold religious admiration?

In this view is Mildrington the Barrister presented. Lamentably falling short of the *Heros de Roman* standard; full of those failings, weaknesses, good and evil starts, and, above all, inconsistencies with our own loudly-trumpeted principles. In short, a true man and a brother—a mirror of ourselves; “precious,” says old Fuller, somewhere, “to those that, like the elephants, loathe to see their own face.”

## II.

## MILDRINGTON THE BARRISTER.

MILDRINGTON the Barrister had chambers in Dunstan's Inn. The porter, who lived uncomfortably in a splendid place of punishment at the gate, horribly inconvenient, yet strictly correct, according to the architectural canons, directed inquirers to No. 18, Fuller's Buildings, first flight. Such inquirers had usually a two-fold character; some of an irregular, mundane complexion, bearing tiny despatches, marked with pale-tinted ciphers; others carrying huge swollen bundles of writing, which were however more strictly professional in shape. These favours then were highly significant of a thriving business, in, as it were, hostile directions; he being in a good fashionable practice, as well as in a brisk legal activity. He was

a sort of equity young Lochinvar; equally distinguished in the walks of love and of that war which is waged by litigation.

A cab has just trundled by the janitor, now blinking in his mediæval hutch. It has a portmanteau tossing unsteadily upon the roof. It is the hour of the evening when the provinces cast their swarms broadcast upon Babylon, and legions of burdened cabs diverge in clouds from every railway. Mails and expresses have come in, and in their wake a universal and noisy miscellany. It is likely then that this clear white face, which is looking from the cab now trundling through Dunstan's Inn, has journeyed from some such quarter, and is being borne back again to its own fireside. This face, presented with such mean surroundings, belongs to Mildrington the Barrister, the hero of this narrative.

That unit of the London millions—the unknown X of the streets, who was splashed at a corner, and entered indignant protest by fierce scowl, saw that firm white face; noted its thought, calmness,

and high intellectuality, and checked the loud oath dancing to his lips. He saw none of that undue flesh or colour, which betokens a certain earthiness and habits of earthiness. A young man, thirty or so, at that moment clearly busy with some mental problem. So his cab whirled him away, and we have seen him for an instant framed ingloriously in the window of a public stage. Unheroic, nay, degrading, introduction; for it is but fitting that your true and splendid heroes should never move, but with their music playing before them, and all their official robes on. At least this was customary with our Edgar Mandleberts, and the Delviles, and Belmores, and other noble chevaliers. Now-a-days they creep on, in a homely humdrum fashion, bringing a just discredit on their cloth.

Thus splendidly glorified in his triumphal car, Mildrington is set down at the steps of No. 18, Fuller's Buildings. He is up-stairs on the first floor in an instant, and has plunged impetuously into his green chamber. Not unreasonably had he been

reputed a sort of legal sybarite and equity exquisite. Sea-green paper, with gold mouldings, were refinements barely suited to a pure Chancery navvy or hodman. A kind of decent squalor and purposed disorder was the true faith in Dunstan's Inn; and here was an heresiarch in the very heart of the place.

That strange soul, who in Universities and Inns of Court is neither man nor yet woman, but of a common gender—"Laundress"—had done some scrubbing and burnishing to his effects, by way of jubilee for the return. She has set out, in a file upon the table, all such legal favours as may have dropped in during his absence; and a row of fair Circassian slaves, each with a zone of bright red tape about her waist, wait the pleasure of their sultan. It was his custom to survey these beauties with satisfaction for a few moments, and feast his eyes upon their charms. They came upon him always with a sort of surprise, and he would smile on them with a kind of tempered delight.

Yet on this occasion he has not cared



to loose the zones of his Circassians ; but has passed them by hurriedly, and without so much as a look. Something lies under this gross disloyalty and neglect. Yet these briefs are pressing. That heavy injunction matter before His Honour the Master of the Rolls, stands for Monday morning, first in the list ; it is, we may say, good half a stone weight of ink and paper, and might take a fair week's scutching in a common brain. Yet he passed it by, and walked straight up to the chimney-piece, where are his letters also marshalled regimentally, set up on their edges, by that poor drum-major of a laundress. This line he swept in a minute—legal, domestic, from shops, from public offices, with 'writers' names outside—all to be tossed by contemptuously ; for one that he sought was not among them. A sheer disappointment. He had leapt from his unpoetic cab, and bounded into his room, with the certainty of finding what he sought. Looking in that mirror on the sea-green paper, he can see disappointment in his own face, if he choose. The Circas-

sians shall lie there some time before he thinks of them, or unloose their red tape zones.

It was not Mr Mildrington's nature to be easily diverted from the stiff tramway he had laid down for many miles in advance along his life. Its terminus twinkled in the distance, an indistinct speck, now enlarging into the hazy proportions of a woolsack, now dwindling into the bald letters of Q.C. So, with an impatient stretching of both arms, and a brisk tossing back of his hair, he brushed away all importunate fancies into a corner, and drew in his chair for work. Then bundling together legal subjects, he pounced upon "In re Bullock, a lunatic," with a swoop, and in an instant was standing on him, with beak and talons disembowelling him furiously. In half an hour he had torn out the very heart of Bullock, the lunatic; had devoured his whole interior economy, so as to rehearse the whole anatomy fluently before the Lord High Chancellor on Monday; and tossing the remains to one side, was ready to strike at an-

other. "Pupchington, Minors," are selected for the Happy Despatch, and in an instant are writhing in the hands of this legal slaughterer. There is not very much of substance in Pupchington, Minors, who are flung away in a few minutes, thoroughly eviscerated. So with the rest. By eight o'clock this shambles work is over, and Mildrington the Barrister has sucked the marrow from all his victims. He is not flushed or tired with this brisk procedure; only a little breathed.

Then, pushing back his chair, and after a moment's deliberate thought, he passed into the room where were the sea-green curtains, and was obscured temporarily. Then, say after some twenty minutes, reappeared, splendid in full evening uniform—fresh, brilliant—and with the dust and gore cleansed away. Those stiff canonicals, enforced so rigorously on parade at evening parties, did not adhere with the accustomed wooden inflexibility to his figure. They seemed to fall away in a sort of drapery and handsome folds, that seemed incompatible, at first sight, with the meagre-

ness of the orthodox pattern. But Mr Mildrington had a good figure and a better carriage; and had, besides, lighted on a sort of sculpturesque tailor—a Zeuxis of the shears and goose—who, besides mere stitching and cutting, knew something of the human form. From this drawer, where there is a depôt of such articles, a pair of gloves, new, speckless, and without a wrinkle. From this—another depôt—a delicate handkerchief. From this little bin of flasks and bottles, a sprinkle of perfume. Mr Mildrington is casting about to see that he is, as it were, complete—a whole and perfect Apollo for the drawing-room—when some one taps at his outer door.

This is Mr Filders, chief clerk to Small and Tunbridge, eminent attorneys. The name of Small and Tunbridge was on the back of that heavy bale, “In re Bullock; a lunatic;” and it is in reference to that matter that Mr Filders drops in.

“You know, Mr Mildrington,” said Mr Filders, laying his hat carefully on one side, and making arrangements for a

prolonged stay; "you know that this business of Bullock's comes on on Monday."

Mildrington accepted these tokens of serious delay with great cheerfulness and interest. He took off his Phidian garment, and was in his dressing-gown-of-all-work in an instant. In an instant more, he and Filder, taking a joint header from off a spring-board, are groping in unhappy Bullock's bowels. It is a delicate affair, this of Bullock's the lunatic; and requires some nice legal manipulation, Bullock being on that debatable ground where there is not complete sanity, nor yet satisfactory madness.

"You will see Serjeant Rooker half an hour before the court sits, for consultation. Rooker is great in these touchy lunacy cases," said Mr Filder, rising, after session of a good hour. "You shall have the fresh affidavits early on Monday morning. Bless my soul! It is very late—and I believe you were going out."

Mildrington did not fear to lose character by any irregular out-door night work,

and never grovelled before attorney Dagon. His true Moloch was his own profession. Perhaps, on that account, he revered its priesthood. He saw him out to the door, with a measured progress, nay, even brought him back for a sort of verbal postscriptum.

Mr Filder, set right upon this last point, at length went his way, and Milderington, again resplendent in that marriage garment, without which every man is pretty sure to be turned away from the feast in this nineteenth century, is presently flying through the night in his hired chariot. He is being hurried to the new world of music—to the Royal Italian Opera. He is thinking—though a vile unlicensed orchestra is jingling horribly at each window of his cab—of that tiny letter which should have been among the other notes—clearly the Benjamin of his brethren. Perhaps he is now gone forth to seek the missing one : for that business of “*In re Bullock*” impending, he would not be likely to dally. It is certain too that he was but a poor man of music. He

found the harsh diapason of Westminster Hall, the do re mi fa of statement and reply, infinitely more harmonious. What should a man, to whom operas are odious, hurry to operas for? According to the well-worn saw, not everything that glitters must be accounted for gold ; and not all that go down to music in cabs are musicians.

### III.

#### THE SORROWS OF THE "HALF WORLD."

ABOUT this time, a sweet and melodious singing woman, after hopping from one theatrical twig to another, and ravishing the hearts of foreign rustics, had suddenly perched upon one of the royal operas in London. A happy impresario (to be beatified surely for his skill), who travelled Europe with a silken landing-net on his shoulder, had been skilful enough to secure this exquisite specimen for his collection. She came, sang, and set the lieges frantic. They rushed tumultuously to her, and crunched each other's limbs at pit doors. Her glory and her crown was the delineation of the sorrows of a poor naughty lady of ill reputation and ill health, of the class playfully figured by M. Dumas the younger, under the parable of the bruised



peach at three sous. For the peach at three sous might, indeed, be suitable companion for the costly fruits in Chevet's window, only for that little faint soil or bruise on the under side, barely appreciable—almost invisible, yet fatal. This is M. Dumas the younger's pleasant interpretation of his figure.

The sorrows and sufferings of the naughty lady in ill health roused the tenderest sympathies. The veil was lifted, and, for the first time, we find ourselves wandering, with an eager curiosity, over the pleasant pastures of the demi monde, "half world." We shiver at the short hacking cough, and Sir Harvey Parkes, reeking from his hospitals, protests that the whole thing is exact in all pulmonary details. People relish without satiety the gasps, the spasms, the sudden paleness, the hectic flushes, the catchings of the chest, the sinkings, the risings, the fallings, the ghastly smiles, and the hundred other incidents of pronounced consumption. A little sin, in a pathological point of view, is a new idea. An agreeable combination

of frailty of manners, along with frailty of lungs, had in it something piquant.

The whole world began to feel that the "half world" has been, in a manner, cruelly misunderstood. Reparation is due to the offended shade of Mrs Haller—in decent horror of which amiable and repentant woman our ladies had too long been passing over to the other side of the street. Here was "The Lost Sheep," set to music, straying from the original sheep-walk (at best a very humdrum domain) to the most fascinating melodies. As the camelia had been consecrated for public veneration, so here was now a choice hot-house fruit set up for joint sympathy and homage, and a lost Pleiad restored to the firmament under the figure of the "Damaged Peach."

The Saturday on which Mildrington the Barrister was being driven to the opera was the Saturday in the first week of this lost sheep delirium. The house was filled—compressed densely as by hydraulic power. Down the grand pit prairie rolled and eddied huge waves of humanity. A

glittering and decorated humanity ran in gaudy rings, round and round, ascending in stages, ascending to the more airy regions, where, speaking comparatively, the distilled rascality of the planet herds in looser miscellany. The air is filled with a subdued hum of mournful and despairing music—a “half world” diapason—and Mildrington is compressed by the hydraulic pressure into a stall, surrendered to him by a departing friend, and gets his legal faculties into rank and file again, a little confused by the glare, and colours, and population, and illuminated immensity. Mildrington observes that a venerable person, richly dressed in gold and velvet, of pleasing and gentlemanly manners, and with a rusted-gray beard, has actually come down from Paris, and is at this moment conducting, in a desponding duet, a nice and delicate negociation. Nothing can be in better taste than the manner in which his proposals, hard and cruel as they are, are met by that outraged lady. Not a remonstrance beyond the authorized vocal expostulation. The father, pleading for

his son, feels the false position in which he has placed himself, and is justly ashamed. He falters, baritonically, his excuses. The hapless lady, for whom the mild climate of Nice will presently be prescribed, has retired with a run (vocal not physical) of the most plaintive agility. But as she goes she is caught by another spasm. The pulmonary unsoundness is developing itself fearfully. Old man (well-meaning but imbecile) this is *your* work.

Mildrington has not been following the diagnosis of the disease. Neither does he care to study that delicate debatable ground, where the "half world" country shades off into the more decent territory. During those awful fits of musical asthma, which holds every listener rapt, he was profanely busy, anxiously raking those little eyries or nests with an opera glass. He performs this operation methodically—barristerially so to speak—travelling round and searching the interior of each with prodigious steadiness. By the agency of his instrument he intrudes without licence into many of these little chambers, and looks close into

stiffened faces and swimming eyes. Yet he found not what he sought. Those curtains half-drawn ; his glass could not help him round those. He chafed and stamped angrily. He began his search again, more carefully this time, half turned away from the stage. Yet here we are in the thick of that unpleasant scene which, it will be remembered, took place at a fashionable bal masqué, when the unmanly Alfredo so far forgot himself as to assail the poor lady, before all the company. Nor does Mr Mildrington pay more attention when the leading persons in this sad drama come well to the front, and each, on his or her own behalf, personally address themselves to Mildrington and the audience with a separate version of the transaction, the general company behind corroborating the narratives boisterously with loud adhesion. He has lowered his opera glass, for he has found his special eyrie, and as the curtain came slowly down, is away cleaving a path through the crowd impetuously.

Other glasses have before this time been levelled in that direction. Some are kept

steadily to the eye for a protracted period, then taken down slowly, and passed to a neighbour with earnest remark. Neighbour takes a long satisfactory look, and hands it back with reluctance to the lender, who looks again.

## IV.

## THE FIRST SYREN.

WHAT they see is this :—A small oval face, almost that of a child, yet to be taken certainly as that of a girl, but so delicately and tenderly cut as to seem quite a fairy face. The hair of a yellowish gold ; in itself sufficient to magnetize a legion of lorgnettes ; and over all an intense devotional expression. The hands, of the same delicate miniature pattern, joined in an attitude of prayer. Very perfect is this airy fairy figure, and to those who looked suddenly, it left an impression, as of a flash of golden light from the face, and of almost a purely transparent complexion.

“She’s like that Cenci woman, you know, in the what’s-his-name palace,” says Captain Callander of the Sixteenth, who had spent last winter in Rome. In that

little wooden chamber of entertainment, *in nubibus* almost, are two other ladies with her. One a woman of thirty, firm-featured and tall, almost masculine; the other elderly, with a Frenchwoman's moustache on her upper lip, and clearly in the relation of parent to the other two. Presently to them enters Mildrington, to the eyes of one of the party with a flash as of an archangel, and a gorgeous vision in the doorway.

The fairy ceased communing with Heaven and suspended devotion; the masculine sister turned with a sharp, vigorous smile of pleasure; the moustache, for the moment, appeared less to be objected to as an element of female beauty. It was a universal and flattering welcome for the hero—one of three lady-power. The fairy seemed a glittering trinket to be hung as a charm from the watch chain. Mr Mildrington often thought he had never seen such workmanship. At first he used to study it, with a curious delight; by and by it would be lit up for *him* specially, and a soft light shining through the crystal



transparency ; and he began to covet this exquisite toy with a certain uneasy feeling. But all the while this logical and legal Mildrington fancied he had firm hold of the reins, and could direct himself whither-soever he would.

On this night of the apotheosis of the "Damaged Peach," this toy seemed indeed a precious gift ; she seemed not wholly earthly—something of an alabaster texture, suffused with a divine light. So did she strike upon Mildrington's perplexed vision, who could not account to himself for the sensation. The strokes of her voice went tingle, tingle, like a silver bell ; it rang out for the rest of that night, far sweeter music than that corrupted strain which was floating upwards from below. Nay, though the poor lady of the "half world" was nigh touching the final issue, breaking small vessels in the lungs, being confirmed in the last stage of her disorder, with the family physician in attendance, and prescribing drugs musically ; though an instructive hospital case is going forward, there are two beings very high up, who

pay it no manner of attention in the world. From off Mildrington's heart were being fast peeled away whole layers of Coke upon Lyttleton.

He felt himself turning away with repugnance from the cold, bloodless figures of Justitia and her sister Lex. *That* was indeed falling in love with a statue.

Nor must it be imagined that Mildrington was at this period of his life, what may be called pastoral and weakly, or a mere reflection of the lovesick Alfredo down below. He was advancing of his own free will, graduating his progress carefully, and ascending at his pleasure.

Tingle went the silver bell again; *that* music was just tipped by ever so little of a French accent. "Yes," it rings, "it is indeed settled; and when we have got back"—

"Got back," said Mildrington, "when, how, where?"

But a moment before he had been determining that he would pluck this fruit eventually, but at his own convenience. He had so marked it out, and that was sufficient. No one else should touch it.

“Back again to beautiful France ; yet some way not so beautiful to me *now* as I always thought it would be.”

Interiorly this piece of intelligence confounded him. By his face, he was thought to have taken the news indifferently, at least with a genteel neglect. For those false informers—the cowardly muscles and blushes of the face were to him docile as spaniels.

“Going away,” he said. “This is very sudden.”

“Yes,” tinkled the chimes, to which he bent his ear eagerly. “Our brother has written for us. He says we *must* come. He has purchased a lovely cottage among the vines ; and his will we have been accustomed to consider ours.”

The inner Mr Mildrington entered violent protest against this tyranny ; the inner Mr Mildrington was chafing, vexed that his trinket which he loved to play with should be taken from him. The Mr Mildrington who lived outside was as smooth and impassive as though ‘a brief marked with a large fee were being handed to him.

"But you do not go now," he said,—  
'at least for some time.'

"Alas! yes," she answered. "I fear to-morrow night will be our last night in London. We are very much grieved to go—indeed we are. *They* are not so sorry; but I cannot bring myself to hate London."

Mildrington's trinket, as she made this plaintive speech, looked the daintiest and loveliest piece of human *bijouterie* that could be conceived. Still that outer crust remained smooth and unbroken, but inside was going forward a secret and hasty debate. There was a duality in him then—one half being busy with the miniature lady, the other weighing chances and probabilities, forecasting the future—gathering the elements for a serious resolution. The two operations went on contemporaneously.

"Well," said he, beating his hand with his glove, "our course through life is all marked with these snapping of chains. A little soldering by and by, and they will be as strong as ever. Of course you will return?"

“Never!” the silver bell tinkled, mournfully. “Not for years, certainly.”

Here a rebellious muscle had well-nigh betrayed Mr Mildrington by a twitch. But he had now almost decided.

They had been grossly neglectful of the poor consumptive lady, now facing the king of terrors in a last asthmatic struggle. The rude decorations of the bedroom were presented with a faithfulness that commanded admiration. Here were all the legitimate *matériel* of sickness—the significant phial, the still more significant little boxes of pink card, whose purport a very child can determine. Here she lies, poor lady, surrounded, strange to say, by her *male* friends only, amongst whom is recognized with pleasure the family physician, whose baritone comes in with fine effect in a last moribund quartette.

The house is disgorging itself in floods down the grand staircase; Mildrington is drifted away with the rest; little Fairy’s opera cloak, with pink and white hood, beside him. They wait until the greater currents shall have swept by, leaning

against the wall a little apart from the rest. The silver tinkling is heard again; but this time, as it were, muffled in a pink hood.

"No, it cannot be. It is fixed. We are to go."

"Well, then," said Mr Mildrington, "just listen. Give me all your attention," and stooping down to the little figure beside him, whispered some words.

Harshly breaks in the trumpeting of the carriage stopping below, and the two flit away obediently.

Tinkling of silver bells is well-nigh drowned in rolling of wheels, and the thud of horses' hoofs, and rough shouting of men. Yet Mr Mildrington contrived to hear much of that sweet music, and just caught so much of its tinkling as sounded in the key of "Yes." Consent of some species had been given. Perhaps there would be no need now for French passports; Mr Mildrington was as calm and tranquil as though he had been "moving" the Vice-Chancellor. True, at first he had surprised himself, pacing home express,

and with but a dim and imperfect observance of passers-by and vehicles. But quickly becoming sensible of this abnormal humour, he restored the old tone by a staid progress, and proceeded with decency. After the gaudy opera, his chambers, and their bare bald accidents, struck him with a chill: it was as he Cinderella coming home. But finding a fresh brief laid out for his notice, he wrenched the system back to its old joints by pouncing on the subject; then disembowelled it carefully, went to bed, and slept calmly.

Yet it was not without a doubtful significance, that first serious step of his. Did he heed omens, here was an omen of most sinister augury. He should properly that night have had a strange mangle-mangle dream, wherein all things were topsy-turvy and in jumble—a sort of hobgoblin, nightmare marriage rite—altars decked with camelias—the organ and choirs of the “half world” playing him into church—the noble lady of those pretty white flowers herself blessing the union. To the strong mind, such vision could only

bring laughter ; yet to one of weaker material, looking back on his nuptial anniversary years after, it would come strange to think he had offered himself, heart and soul, fresh from the influence of “*La Traviata*.”



## V.

## QUEEN MILDRINGTON.

MR MILDRINGTON'S mother was still living, dwelling in a suburb of the great city, and easily accessible. She relished the faint vitality of her quarter, and lived among the stagnant or dead-alive of the neighbourhood with considerable satisfaction. A reference to our fashionable sacred volume—the gospel according to Sir Bernard—will testify that this stately, well-saved, sound, good-looking, and, above all, aristocratic lady (elderly, but not old), who journeys into London every day in her Brougham, was once the lovely Miss Heneage of that fine-flavoured old country stock, the Heneages of Mount Heneage, in Dorsetshire. She had married one Charles Mildrington (we still quote from the sacred volume), and by that gentle-

man—also of a splendid country stock—had issue—Percy Mildrington, the subject of this memoir. Old majors, and still older generals, speak of her in the very height of senile raptures, as “a fine woman, sir;” “splendid creature, sir, Lucy Heneage”—strengthening their admiration by an adjective whose root is the Prince of Darkness. It was admitted, too, by the same judges, that Lucy Heneage still “held up” wonderfully, and that her fine “person” as yet showed no signs of that shrunken and meagre stage, and general impoverishment, which is the outrider of old age.

The lovely Miss Heneage had brought to Mildrington the father a portion of some thirty thousand pounds, which sum had been settled strictly on herself. Having been all through her life a kind of despotic Catherine the Second, in reference to her household generally, and more especially in reference to that Peter Mildringtonvitch who was her husband, it was an easy matter to have her own fortune, as well as all Mildrington the husband’s, bequeathed to herself; and she now had

the free disposal of some fifty thousand pounds, together with the lay advowson, as it were, of a compact little ancestral estate, with old Elizabethan mansion attached, known as Mildrington Grange. These bounties she held in the hollow of her hand—did this plated Empress Catherine—at the disposal of her purest whim. These she dangled before Mildrington—baby, child, boy, youth, young man, and man full grown—as menace or encouragement; not, it must be said, without a certain effect; for though he would have scouted the notion of his being purchased or frightened into submission, still there was that weak flank to his nature—that worship of good blood, and of his own proper blood and ancestry specially. That old red brick mansion, with its high roof and gables, and noisy rook retainers, was to him as an heraldic casket, to which he fondly yearned from that round of burrowing in the legal warrens. This digging and delving would soon pass by—the hod barristerial would not be always on his

shoulder. This plebeian drudgery would one day have its term, and, bursting from this whig-and-gown chrysalis, he would flutter forth a brilliant butterfly of aristocratic hues. Thus was Mildrington more or less ductile under the maternal sceptre. A lever of this description is of tremendous mechanical power in quickening the filial relations.

Being a person of high quality, she did not too much relish that low legal labourer's work to which her son had taken so heartily; but his own will was to the full as stiff, as close-grained, as unbending as hers. She avoided, then, direct clash and jar. Besides, he had promised that when he had dug up so many furrows—whether in face, or other more earthy matter still, he did not define—he would stay his hand. Besides, for an aristocrat to go down into this puddling work, and beat the other commoner navvies at their own muddy labours, was, in itself, aristocratic enough.

It was part of the tribute that Mildrington owed this empress, that he should

repair to the suburb at fixed periods : and it was rigorously exacted that he should present himself of a Saturday night, and stay over Sunday, until Monday morning. It was likely, therefore, that this flagrant violation of the conventional practice would be resented. The suburban Empress Catherine loved her private state—was rigid on matters of petty homage.

Mildrington was out there by breakfast-time of the Sunday morning, calm, placid, and with his secret in his breast. He took it in with him. Grove House was the name of the residence—a decent widow's villa in a sort of widow's cap of white wall, and with two great wooden gates that swung to like the lid of a chest.

The empress was on her throne, just behind the tea-urn.

“You were unwell last night,” she said, with imperial austerity.

“No,” said Mildrington; “I was in good health, but was kept at my chambers until very late; and then” —

“You were not sick then,” with greater austerity; “and I waited until eleven

o'clock—the gates were kept open expressly."

There was always an awful ceremonial attendant on the opening or closing of those wooden gates. Mildrington knew her humour. It was always shorter and less troublesome to play the prodigal or even the penitent thief.

"Dear mother," he said, "I am sorry to have kept you up. I ought to have thought of that. But the fact is, I was very tired, and very busy, and very lazy. I got through no end of work before I went to bed; and then a boring clerk came in, and then"—

He called a hurried cabinet council to consider the propriety of telling of that opera business—hastily divided—and decided in the negative.

"And then—may I have some coffee and bread buttered now, as a good boy that will do badly no more; or shall I go into the corner, with my face to the wall?"

Mrs Mildrington would have liked a yet more wholesome prostration in the

dust. However, it did well enough, and would go for so much on account. After breakfast they went together in state to their public worship. On their road thither Mrs Mildrington spoke a deal of interesting carnal matters.

"You cannot always go on soiling your gentlemanly fingers with those filthy papers. How can you stand the breath of those clerks? I should like to see you down at Mildrington—a country gentleman of good blood, with hounds, horses; with the best families calling on you—you perhaps county member."

"Those days are a good way off," said Mildrington, with something like the echo of a sigh.

"Perhaps not so far off as you think," said Mrs Mildrington, beginning to step out grandly with her empress stride.

"I have not been idle while you were away—I have been planning—in fact, I have nearly decided. The old place will be shortly out of lease, it shall then be re-

paired and thoroughly refitted and furnished."

It was part of Mildrington's training never to admit surprise, still less delight, so he said—

"Ah! you are going to let it again?"

Mrs Mildrington spurned the notion with a wave of the Church Service.

"No. It is to be inhabited. You may live there if you like."

"I!"

"Yes. You and your wife."

"Ah!"

This time he gave a guilty start, but recovered himself.

"I say," Mrs Mildrington repeated, "you shall marry and live there. I give it to you as my nuptial present."

Mildrington felt it would be ungracious to appear indifferent to this kind speech. So he crashed down his impassive fences, and said handsomely that she was only too good to him.

"As to marriage"—

"I have thought of that too. It all



works on smoothly together. Seriously, you are too slow over the business. You are good-looking now, but the wear and tear of work will soon finish that. This is your time for"—

"Advantageous sale," said he smiling.

"Yes," said Mrs Mildrington seriously.

"*You* have not chosen. *I* have."

"*You* have?" and for a second time he was startled. For the first time the responsibility he had taken on himself in the blaze and whirl of last night seemed more serious, almost terrible.

• "Yes. I have selected Marion Boleyn, Churstone Boleyn's daughter—thirty thousand pounds, blue blood, and a net of splendid connexion over the country. Her mother and I were at school together."

"Oh! And what does Churstone Boleyn's daughter say to the arrangement?"

"That is for you to make out. Here is church now. There, I declare, is old Lady Twinpecker, rouged and raddled as ever! She should leave her paint outside the House of God. Yes, my dear, we must

marry you. And Marion Boleyn comes and dines with me to-day. My book, please."

So they entered and went with a sweet devotion to their pew.—*Oremus.*

## PART II.

---

I.

## THE SECOND SYREN.

MR MILDRINGTON was seen to pray into his hat for a short span, and to comply with the other decent observances of piety; yet it is to be feared that his spirit was profanely abstracted from the rites before him. Sinful and irregular beyond all doubt. Yet, when the grand parliamentary return is ordered, and the universal bill of discovery filed, it is likely there will be many columns charged with details of plans debated and schemes ripened, of doubts, plots, fierce mental battles, and dismal broodings, all entertained within a rod of the sanctuary. What if it should be discovered to have been the real chamber *à secretis*, the

most private of sanctuaries, where was the chiefest tranquillity and repose for deliberation ; for which, too, have been kept apart and reserved special plans and pet points ? Marriages have been made in heaven, but it is likely many more have been projected in church and chapel.

Mr Mildrington was accustomed to say among his friends, that after once forming a serious resolution he never allowed after-thoughts to disturb his mind. The scaffolding once pulled down, there could be no alterations. He hinted even that such was his perfect mental discipline, that all conscientious doubts and protests never so much as dared to re-present themselves. A complacent but delusive theory. There was that final plunge he had taken the night before ; and here was he now in his select Belgravian pew, with his eye upon that one unchanged page of his Prayer Book, in a chaos of misgivings and perplexities. He had been precipitate ; he had leaped too soon. That picture of the young lady of fair birth, by whose agency he was to be absorbed into the immortals ;

that having his own blood, somewhat thin and impoverished, fortified by the noble crusted fluid, which had lain a hundred generations in bottle; that sumptuous framing of him, as it were, in a pastoral piece, as an ancestral country gentleman; these things disturbed him much, and formed his divine service for that Sunday.

'That was a most perplexing case which was sent to P. Mildrington, Esq., Barrister-at-Law, for advice and opinion, at his chambers in the church pew. To be sure, there is the grand guide, which is always the simplest; to do the right thing, to follow the unerring voice, with other matters of sound doctrine, most loudly preached by those who are happily not just then under pressure to do the right thing, or to follow the unerring voice. To tell, therefore, his mother of his last night's contract, at all risk of domestic confusion, and thus avoid being entangled in any consequent embarrassment, which would only thicken every day, was perhaps the simplest course. But, alack! it was the hardest! And, then, these angry autokra-

tic mothers, who have the testamentary slicing-knife in their hand—in *terrorem*—ready to “cut off,” at a moment’s notice; though the grand and the undying principle, the doing of the right thing, should be carried out at all risk, without looking behind, still that slicing operation must be and will have itself considered in church or chapel. The only thing was to find a middle course, some sort of intermediate plank, which time might, possibly. Devoutly, then, in the recesses of his pew he sought this plank, while a sermon was going forward, either on Love of the World, or Love of our Neighbour, or Love of the Pure Personal Self, he could not say which. The drone monotonous in which this discourse was levelled suggested to him the chanting of affidavits in the offices of his own profession; and it struck him so forcibly, that with a listless curiosity he inquired at the door, as he went out, the name of this suburban divine, and found it to be Rooker—the Rev. Thomas Rooker. He made him a neat little dining anecdote, and gave a delineation

of the suburban sermon with much success.

The comfort he fetched out of his pew was this, to wait and leave all to that good creature, Time; not that he put it in that ignoble cowardly fashion—he feared no consequences of a course that was righteous—but there was within him that splendid intellect and that fertile ability which would stand to him at any crisis; so, at least, did Mildrington delicately whisper to Mildrington.

He came home towards dinner-time, after a freshening walk, having now worked out reasoning very clearly, indeed beginning, in fact, to see his way. There was no need of hurry or of vulgar domestic *emeute*. *Mater ultrix* need not have her slicing-knife thrust prematurely into her hand; and besides, we must look to this also. Is she not delicately situated in reference to agitations and excitements? What said Sir Popple Page in Brighton? We must be careful. This is ticklish ground. So you see after all it was a fine

sense of filial humanity that settled the question.

Then, as to the young lady coming, this *aspirante*, said he, with a sarcastic smile, *she* must not run risk of sacrifice in any possible complication. No, with her we must take a straightforward manly course. *That* was not so difficult. It should be conveyed to her—tenderly always, and by the agency of a peculiar manner, which he kept by him for such purposes—that she was unsought and unappreciated; leave that to him. He flattered himself that *his* dexterity would be equal to the occasion.

So, with this off his mind, just so much waste *debris* of mental doubts shovelled away into a corner, he sped home all the lighter. Then he was ready for more gracious entertainment, and the fairies and scene-shifters of pleasant memory and reverie lit up their theatre for him as he walked, and set again for him the piece of last night—a gorgeous transformation scene, blazing with all the gold



and silver and precious stones of the stage, and a celestial queen of the fairies, a being of light and glory, rising in the centre.

He entered the drawing-room carelessly; and it being pretty far gone into the winter, he found an artificial moon already at the full, and all things suffused with the soft moderate effulgence. Here was Queen Semiramis on her throne, and beside her a pale eastern princess, of somewhat lowlier degree.

Mildrington recollected perfectly that languid graceful figure, which seemed to be rising from the light foam of a white muslin sea; recollected also the fine oval of her face, and also that pale brown hair, so soft and smooth, not separated with a hard distinctness from her forehead, but fined off with a delicate gradation. He had taken with him also a general sense of elegance and unobtrusive refinement, which he contrasted with that rough abundance of coarser charms which he always associated with those of lower degree. Above all, there was nobody who could pass by those strange eyes, so full

and round, reposing in a deep haze or atmosphere of their own; through which the mere vulgar inquisitor might strive and strive, and yet never pierce. As there is one feature usually working itself in a certain prominence, and determining what is the face, so it was with these strange eyes, which fell so thoughtfully on the men and women of the outer world, widening and dilating behind that mysterious veil of its own.

Mildrington had met her once before, but it was in the rout and hurly-burly of a frantic valse. Though not strictly of the Guild of Dancing Barristers, still he did not disdain—when day was about breaking, and the carnival growing fast and furious—to take one frantic round in the *melée*. Thus had the soft dilating eyes fallen on him, and measured him, as he was brought up captive. It was the merest varnish of an acquaintance. They had fled in an instant on their wild race—then had parted. Such exercise she went through impassively, as part of her routine drill, as enforced by all fashionable rules

and general orders, and Mildrington went his way, having written her down a cold aristocrat.

As he entered she measured him from the ground upwards, rather letting the full round eyes fall on him dreamingly than making any positive exertion to look at him. She remembered him too, very placidly. There was no artificial start, or *empressé* giggle, or cascade of superfluous smiles, or gush of sham delight ; for such are the legitimate incidents to fashionable recognition. She had been detailing some little history to the Queen Semiramis, while she broke off temporarily for the necessary formalities of greeting, and then resumed again. She was not staggered or confounded by the sudden entrance of an earthly archangel : 'not dazed—~~no~~, not even fluttered or confused. One Monsieur X. had entered ; one Mr A. B. C. had made a third : that was all.

Mildrington, who had come home brimful of complacency, and likely enough to overflow with neat conceits, thinking that *his* monologue was sufficient for all,

was not pleased with this lack of homage. When he came, the matrons and virgins were accustomed to sit round and listen devoutly. He was there seldom. *His* voice was as the breath of their nostrils. Therefore he stood looking at the fire restless, while she finished her history, and he must allow, ungraciously enough, her voice was very sweet.

Présently however he made a grasp at his sceptre, and the herald having now proclaimed dinner, he took her down to the accompaniment of some flowing speeches.

## II.

## TOURNAY.

WITH so daring an insurgent there was clearly but one course. First, sheer indifference, played off with that art which no one needed to tell him he was master of—a calm unconsciousness, a dimness of vision, in respect to this demeanour of hers; thus conveying a hint delicately that such were too insignificant for the regards of her Grand Signor. Hereafter, for pure pastime' sake, he might waken up, dazzle, confound, overwhelm, and force her on her knees an unwilling worshipper.

He would talk down to their poor level, purveying to them the very lees of his brain, out of mere politeness to his female society. This was a happy conception, and he felt it should work effectively with the cold stranger girl. Therefore, he only

served to them such thin washy pabulum as would suit their inferior digestion, referring notably to her for whom he was so handsomely posturing. For the elder lady, the domestic Semiramis of the feast, looked down complacently on the pair, and found the business advancing prosperously.

At the family meal he was very cheerful—almost boisterous. He told stories, scraps and matches from the clubs, but of a curiously ill-natured complexion, dealing principally with episodes of what may be called wax-light society; the wounds and repulses of baffled matrons, and maternal pelicans, questing suitable mates for their young—the shrieks of deserted eaglets calling to heaven for vengeance on the ball-room fowler; malicious legends of old Lady Fanny and Mrs Touzle. These and kindred topics Mildrington detailed with a relish, even an unctuousness wholly foreign to his nature. He played a kind of diluted Mephistopheles in a dress coat, and enjoyed his own performance amazingly.

Balls and parties would be about the suitable diet.

"You were not at Lady Limbo's, I think," he said, "on Wednesday last. No? You must have been at Larches, the M.P.'s, I mean. Pray tell me something about those entertainments, or I shall be undone in polite society. Why, coming home last night, I found a whole litter of notes, out-speaking, as that strange fellow, Carlyle, says of evening parties."

Miss Boleyn lifted her eyes from her plate, and began to show some interest.

"Such a heap!" he went on, "all looking at me reproachfully, and with a glance of such piteous neglect, that positively my heart bled. Do you know I began to feel a curious sense of moral guiltiness stealing over me. I had committed the unpardonable sin. It is not lawful for the sectaries of the true faith of fashion to be away from Mecca in the holy season."

In this sort of sarcastic euphuism Mr Mildrington considered he was specially powerful. He had a pleasant scoffing way of handling a subject, and he was encour-

aged by apparent approbation opposite—secret admiration, perhaps.

“Not that I am of your true elect,” he went on, sliding prematurely into his dazzling manner. “I am more perhaps a polite fakir of society. I worship with the rest, yet do not enjoy. I throw myself under the wheels of the great Juggernaut, and suffer torture, smiling outwardly. Not ten days since the car went over me at Lady Lightbound’s. You know I loathe—yes, absolutely loathe the woman, with all her works and pomps—yet I go, and do mumbo jumbo most hypocritically, at her rout, drum, or whatever that sickening ragout of music, dancing, eating, talking, is to be styled! Do you agree with me?”

This came off smoothly enough. Was she not confounded with the art of this master, thus skilfully playing the topics unworthy of him? She should first admire, pay the exacted homage, then be repelled, frozen, flung backwards. He paused a moment, waiting the effect.

“I have been thinking,” she said, the



eyes lighting up at last; "I have been thinking all this while of that wonderful being, whose name, I believe, you mentioned, and where it was he was pointed out to me. I was hoping you were going to say you had the enviable privilege of knowing him."

Mr Mildrington's lips curled. The sentiment which has been expressed by the forcible figure of pearls before swine, passed through his mind, but in less offensive form.

"I have not the pleasure of knowing him," he said, rather sourly.

"I am glad we agree in thinking it a pleasure—I should be inclined to add, honour also. I was thinking, that perhaps in some of these places of suffering to which only a sense of duty takes you, you might chance to have met him?"

She said this quite gravely and seriously; and the large eyes looked on him with perfect good faith. Yet somehow to him it had the air of a disguised sneer.

"I profess myself one of those low-level intellects," he said, "that can never

dare—even to hope—to be admitted to the knowledge of his mysteries. In this respect I am sunk in a brutish ignorance. Perhaps time and assiduous cultivation may do something for me yet."

"Perhaps so," she said; "and if you are really sincere in your wish to understand you should not be disheartened by failure at first."

"Failure," said Mildrington scornfully, and now warming to the contest; "I fail because I do not attempt. He is the prophet of the unintelligible. I would not confuse my brain with his uncouth utterances, or poison my speech with his false English. He is a veiled prophet, worshipped because not seen or understood. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico*. But I have shocked your ears with Latin at dinner."

"I have heard it once or twice before," she said composedly; "but we are not such poor degraded devotees as you would make out—such blind, ignorant worshippers. It is more the stronger minds that make up *his* following. But," she added,

smiling, "there are image-breakers abroad just as blind as the poor deluded crowd you spoke of—intolerant revolutionaries—who pull down every figure *they* cannot relish themselves."

He chafed at being thus bearded openly, and successfully too, by an inferior mind. Secretly he felt a sort of hostility—and of which, too, he was ashamed—towards her, almost the first of womankind who had dared to question his dogmatic theology. Question?—nay not to applaud. He could scarcely realize the thing, and looked wonderingly across the table to his enemy of the large dark eyes. Mrs Mildrington however, trained in the amatory hostilities of another generation, saw here only agreeable symptoms of sure and steady progress, and listened with dignified approval. Crafty lawyer as he was, Mildrington saw that the next worse thing after being beaten was to have the air of being beaten, and adroitly shifted away to another tack, where he found himself stronger.

But all through the rest of that night,

in the dining-room, in the drawing-room, it was much the same. He staid some time behind them, in the dining-room, ostensibly supporting the fiction of "being left to his wine" in reality. I am afraid concocting some little pitfall to confound that stiffnecked rebel up-stairs. Very different that little woman in the great city. Why *she* prostrated herself, and embraced his knees five-and-twenty times in the day. She had a portable altar on which to set him up, and burnt incense to him every hour.

He came up.

"Did you hear," said Mrs Mildrington eagerly, "of young Ridley's marriage? It is to be forthwith."

"Oh, oh," said Mildrington triumphantly; "then Miss Boleyn *does* take notice of the ways and works of poor mortals—miserable fry that we are—with our marryings and burials. It is too gracious of Miss Boleyn—too much honour. What would your veiled prophet, Carlyle, say to such backsliding? There would be an endless shower, a torrent of 'bottled moon-

shine,' or 'apes of the Dead Sea.' Ha ! ha ! ”

She looked in undisguised astonishment—the large eyes widening. With great skill she conveyed that she deemed him somewhere on the dusky borders of insanity, at best utterly incoherent, then turned wistfully to the mother, as looking for explanation.

“What rhapsodies you are talking to-night,” the queen said a little sharply. “Marion knew nothing of young Ridley’s marriage. It was I who told her.”

Mildrington was now fairly afloat.

“Not know of young Ridley’s match !” he exclaimed in theatrical horror. “He, the tender boy—suckling Moloch—whom the matrons have set up in gold—solid gold—mark you ! And lo ! they brought him all their virgins, but he would have none of them—but selected a bondwoman—yea, a Canaanitish woman. Miss Boleyn not know of young Ridley, so lovely in the sight of women ! What, not so much as a grain of incense before the idol ! Come, Miss Boleyn.”

Again she turned to Mrs Mildrington.

"My poor wits cannot follow Scripture and young Ridley side by side. It seems incomprehensible. Would you translate for me?"

"And yet you can find your prophet, Carlyle, intelligible," he said, with a polite sneer.

"Ah, *that*, INDEED!" she said, with enthusiasm.

There was a whole breath of cruel comparison in those three words. It was as who should say the things compared were the whole width of the Poles asunder. "Ah, *that*, INDEED." To his disordered nerves there seemed even a ring of contempt in the sound.

Mildrington under. His seconds take him to his corner, and restore him. It is noteworthy, as a mark of character, that ever after, Mr Mildrington was observed to lean with savageness on the peculiarities of his famous Mr Carlyle. He even gathered up a little wallet of the few little affectations which disfigure this noble

writer, and was very comic exhibiting them at dinner parties.

Through the rest of the evening he did not do battle with very much success. Those large full eyes pursued him pitilessly and confused him; and so floundering incautiously, he fell into many an ambuscade, and exposed himself in light slips, of which, without broad open detection, for which, as it were, she would not take the trouble, she showed herself perfectly *cognizant* by a mere hint, yet not inclined to condescend to notice. It is to be feared it was an inglorious rout for Mildrington, though strictly in private, and he retired, near midnight, leaving the field strewn with his wounded and *matériel* of war.

“Good child!” said the Queen Semi-ramis, who took an altogether different view of the transaction; “it goes on well. How do you like—noble, high-bred creature?”

Poor antiquated soul! She read such matters by the light that was fashionable in the days when great George was king! True lovers marked, and scratched, and

flouted one another, and bade angry farewell for ever; and *then* the love business was indeed held to be ripening. Maids were to be won like Amazons—conquered at the sword's point first.

He went his way bitter and hostile; even vindictive, at least so far as that passive vindictiveness, which we all nourish in secret under the like provocation, but would blush to put into any active shape. No, *she* was not of the shape to suit his soul. Give him nature, animation, warmth, affection, even at the risk of a foolish speech or so, not your cold, repelling vessels of alabaster.



## III.

## MILDRINGTON PROFESSIONAL.

LET us cut out a small span to serve as specimen or sample of the ways and works of this Mildrington of ours—poor frail brother as he is. One brick of this curious Babel will do as well as another for illustrating mere daily routine.

Take it that we are a brazen dun, or skulking detective, with eye to the key-hole, or a London Asmodeus, that can strip down walls and house fronts, or, indeed, disguised in any far-fetched masquerade, that will help us to a glimpse of his privacy.

In that workshop of his, No. 18, Fuller's Buildings, which is the selector, or Belgravian quarter of the Inn, where the legal fashionables have their pale or settle.

ment, was Mildrington the Barrister wielding his pick and shovel.

Sergeant Rebutter, the eminent common law practitioner, was his *vis-a-vis*, and the clang of his forge and anvil rang out musically from over the way : his style and legend bearding Mr Mildrington's in conspicuous white letters. The Sergeant went round all day, and a good portion of the night too, in a private drudgery mill of his own : only his grinding was of a more vital and public nature, having to do with gentlemen of the Jury and witnesses, and that unclean and doubtful miscellany which is filtered through the dock. And as the Sergeant took his grateful exercise, and went through his grand feat of grinding a thousand briefs in a thousand consecutive half-hours, a cloud of spirits, black-coated and gray, with whole pokes of the white linen bales upon their shoulders, flitted down from the various legal laundries, and looked on with admiration.

A portion of these favours, from the mere force of contiguity, had dribbled across to the barristerial minnow, Mil-

drington. True, they went in different tracks: the greater Triton, Rebutter, thundering along the common law rails, the minnow, Mildrington, spinning gently by at ordinary speed on the equity line. Still he was minnow only by comparison; and at this present date there lie upon his office table, smirking in a handsome row, many lovely scrivenery Circassians, labelled and ticketed as slaves of that legal Sultan, with this device,—“For P. Mildrington, Esq.” Accommodation has been found with difficulty for these fair visitors on the edge of a broad bold study table, piled up with that rich litter of paper waifs and strays, which makes the handsomest and most comforting furniture for that stall or nook into which the man of brain settles himself for work. More acceptable that gorgeous untidiness and orderly no-order than the Puritan decency and mournful barrenness of the properly appointed table. The grim methodism and symmetrical uniformity of an arranged table strikes a chill to the heart of the contemplative man, who is unlicensed,

and a sort of literary Zingaro in his tastes. Neither were these particular chambers of that cheerless Newgate-cell pattern, wherein the professional man is fond of taking his turn on the crank ; for its walls were of a pleasant and encouraging green, garnished with pictures in rich and substantial frames, and a gilt moulding ran round the ceiling. There were handsome curtains hanging from substantial cornices ; there was a carved oak bookcase stocked with volumes in all the showy finery of binding, not put to shame too by the sad-coloured quakers of the library, who dress in buckram law calf. But there was a file of these auxiliaries—mainly indispensable text books—who were kept apart in a strict *Ghetto*, where they were accessible for reference in the loose wrappers and dishabille of the earlier cloth binding. There were dainty little curtains, embroidered, that could be drawn in summer time about the fire-place, when its functions were in suspension. There were pipes silver mounted, and there was always abroad a delicate aroma, as of cigars

but lately incandescent. And should the inner door be lying open, there was a glimpse for the visitor of an elegant camp bed of gilt brass, with delicate pale green curtains tentwise. Arm-chairs lay about, and terribly adhesive, devoured the unwary in a most strict embrace.

Let us look and look closer, that we may know our man again. Hitherto we have barely seen the physical Mildrington and the corporeal outside. So we would flounder sadly, perhaps break down, in those passport categories, "yeux bleus; cheveux brunes," and the rest. Here is some help, such as it is. Alack! shall not all mortal men be born into the world, die, and be buried, and be propagated by photographic agency, as mannikins on cards, no bigger than two inches? This is now superadded—a new penalty—to those former ones, coming of Eve's transgression. There is a sort of resurrection in the camera. Mildrington had borne the slow torture by focus. Vevey Frères, artists of the upper circles, had elegantly manipulated him. We have made the acquaint-

ance of a tremendous genie in the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments," who struggles out of a little urn as soon as the cork is removed. Yet here was a greater marvel. Compressed into a photographic casket, and secured with delicate clasps, a Lilliputian Mildrington lies upon many drawing-room tables in a fashionable captivity. According to the right and rubric of evening calls, the volume is placed in each visitor's hands, who becomes for the nonce a kind of enforced *Cedipus* upon their trial. They must guess the name and style of these little sphinxes. And as the paper frames drop through our fingers one by one (for we now are calling at Mrs Jenkinwater's and reviewing her tiny gallery), the insipid royalties and conscious notabilities, fast growing odious from repetition, together with the smirking herd of private nobodies, each composed to a comic dignity by the aid of that antique chair, sure as destiny, or inevitable pillar, we stop at one which is passing by with the rest, and say, doubtfully, "Who is this?" or "I should like to know who

this may be ? ” or if we *do* know it, burst into, “ Ah, this is Mr Mildrington ! ”

No Dutch doll here, with mechanical joints, which the professional manipulator has bent with force into a traditional *pose*. A free natural attitude, such as an unaffected Christian might fall into, in drawing-room or parlour, under no terrorism from an awful self-consciousness. A clear thoughtful face, with fine lines, sharp and cleanly cut, with all superfluous flesh worked away by a steady intellectual training, analogous to that earthly and material process which is a necessity with gentlemen of the ring. No beautiful Adonis this, no “ curled and oiled Assyrian bull,” but a well-made, well-dressed nineteenth-century gentleman of strong mental powers, of stronger will, of much agreeable talk, and winning manners.

This is Mildrington the Barrister, whom we light on in albums of quality, in very good company.

In the sea-green chamber, when he took his plunge into business again the next morning, smiling over last night's

battle, none of his Privy Councillors would dare whisper the word defeat in the chamber. It was the mere surprise of the attack, the audacity of the enemy who dared to face him in his own lines, which made up the comic side of the business. "A strange being," he said, "that will suit some orders of men. But to be half of me, *better-half* as the slang runs," he added scornfully, "no, that would never do. No two Kings of Siam, with equal sovereignty, in a little London house! I must have prostration, adoration, and daily incense." (This was not the *exact naked* shape of his thoughts, but their significance amounted to the same thing.)

He knew where such a devotee was to be found, and he thought of her with a smooth pleasure. "I am sick of the savagery of these gross bachelor ways. I must be rude waif and stray no longer. I dislike those women who unsex themselves, who talk loud and take guns and go out into the conversation shooting-grounds of the men. I shall never do battle with a talking Amazon again. Vic-



tory is no glory, and defeat is disgrace." With this he rubbed her contemptuously out of his memory. The ostrich pursued hides its head in the sand—we know with what result. It was a fresh shining Monday morning, and such mornings starting a fresh week always set him into spirits. He saw the course of his life stretching away before him, the rough places being made smooth, and flowing on pleasantly. He should follow the bent of his own humour without, or in spite of, contradiction ; he should bring home that little woman to sparkle and scintillate in his domestic cellar. Austere Queen Semiramis, at first dissatisfied, should come into his way, soothed by that never-failing persuasion of his, and the outside world (notably the attorney world), confounded at his greatness, should walk before him, casting down gold and silver in his paths. Honours crown him. He forecasted all this, and was in high spirits.

IV.

“ THAT MORAL CENTAUR, MAN AND WIFE.”

LATER in the afternoon he burst upon the worshipping devotee, a glorious apparition, a splendid god ! Madame De Jarnac (of the moustache) and her two daughters were of a ripe *emigré* stock ; that splendid nobility, rich in all things save land and money, and of whom the great French nation had unhappily grown intolerant. Some eight or ten months before this period, an insolent plebeian driver, or unit in some shape of the great unpurified, the sheerest Proletaire, was assailing with loud tongue and gross threats three shrinking ladies, departing from opera, concert, party, or some such entertainment, it matters not what now. The Proletaire was waxing yet grosser in his indignities, when, lo ! a deliverer, a shining archangel in a

robe of light, bursts from a cloud, and stands between them and the low-born Satan. That evil one shrinks away cowed, appalled before the firm authority of the new deliverer, and henceforth Mildrington, the archangel, temporarily disguised in the private suit of mortals, flashes in upon them periodically at morning, more frequently of evenings. Into their lonely dwelling softly illuminated of nights, would the splendid deliverer descend in his cloud, and stand in the centre of worshippers. At least some such archangelic view of him always hovered indistinctly before the eyes of that miniature lady, and there was that romance in his original entry in character of glorious saviour in their hour of distress which never after quitted him. In her little worshipping soul at least, we may be sure that Mr Mildrington, disporting in these pastures, did not conceal his sacrifice, as he would call it, under a bushel, but took care in his own divine manner to set out what splendid prospects he had cast away, all too for the sake of his faithful worshipper. The treasures of

the earth were poured out at his feet to win him ; ladies of surpassing wit and beauty were led up for his selection ; but with his noble archangelic nature he could afford to smile at such bribes. He had made his choice. These baubles of a light world weighed but little with him.

It needs not to dawdle here over the special charms which won this heavenly visitor's heart. Students and professors of the art of love tell us that there are no principles or precedents in the business, and that each case that arises is wholly original and stands by itself. What attracts in this instance fails in that, and worse again, what attracts now actually repels later. The curious may consult Michelet, *passim*, and the other amorists who have written of the subject. This particular maid sang ravishingly, not like a nightingale, which is after all but a poor standard, but like a human being of exquisite voice and more exquisite cultivation. She struck the angelic ministrant with wonder, and taught his sense, hitherto attuned to the jarring discords and un-

resolved sevenths of Cork and Chitty, to take delight in purer musical cadences. Of a night she would take him through all the rich pastures of opera, having that wondrous little head stored with all the treasures of soprano wealth. Coloured, too, with a marvellous dramatic vigour, and utterly disdainful of printed staves or music, it was a vocal *ballet d'action*, with a shower of notes for steps.

Next falls in what may be called the ungrateful hodman's labour, the stern and serious drudgery which is man's portion in that intervening space before he takes his nuptial degree. With the night of proposal, the sweet plaisances and parterres, the flower-beds and velvet pastures pass away. The lights have been turned down, the effulgence, the sparkle, the soft pale pink fires, the fragrance and the revolving suns fade out. That was all last night's farce, and to-day it is a cold chilling morning, when we must be betimes called up by candlelight, shivering, and think of business. Here are the good and amiable relations of the radiant Queen Gloriana,

but last night glistening in smiles and benevolence, glorious in their sparkles, their colours, and artificial bloom, but who have now to get off their finery, and look hard and grim enough, and have a savour of deeds and figures and sealing wax. They have become stiff ogres of a sudden, and their tongues ring out harshly, newly attuned to such themes as lucre, funds, estates, and securities.

Thus Mildrington found himself tramping it, and with much fatigue, through those heavy ploughed lands. There were abundant difficulties, annoyances to such a spirit as his, which chafed and worried him. Above all, there was that strict imperative necessity of working stealthily and under-ground. By and by and at the suitable time, all things should be made known to the terrible Queen Semiramis. But at this present date it would be clearly injudicious—most highly injudicious.

Nor must we suppose that he was of such confiding material, as to take upon trust an uncorroborated narrative, or accept the assurance of the family with

whom he was about to ally himself, that they were of good blood and connexions. He knew well the weak points of too many Chancery petitions, and would require substantial affidavits, or at least some corroborative testimony. So he writes to trusty friends in France, makes sure and confidential inquiries, having previously subjected the young ladies' protector to a polite but searching examination. In due course all things were proved to be satisfactory. The friends' report and the family's own statement squared, pretty accurately, nicely. But in truth Mr Mildrington relied more on his own searching powers and singular instinct. He often said he would trust these more than the five senses of others.

Quietly too did he arrange that other detail, so tedious for ardent lovers, so laborious, so prosaic, but unhappily so necessary.

Therefore it had best be done far away in the land of agreeable licence and easy nuptial forms. From across the Border it must be loudly-voiced consent that

would reach to the ears of Queen Semiramis. We but take the Great Northern Railway Company into the secret: and those faithful carriers will unconsciously furnish us an hymeneal car. It is not a swoop of many hours, and they will be set down in the happy land, the land of loose shackles; where the anklets matrimonial are so lightly riveted on, that prisoners have little difficulty in slipping their feet through and making a happy escape; where there is the grand no-rite ritual; and where, by comic contradiction, a hodge-podge of putting keys on fingers, calling in maid-servants, and menials, signing of passports and hotel books and other tricks, may wind a victim tightly into indissoluble bondage.

Our Mildrington and his little lady did not indeed benefit by that vile travestie, which used to be played out at the Grand Gretna Cathedral, with a handicraftsman bishop to invoke a blessing and join their hands. That degradation had been happily scoured away. But there is still left the old Scotch disorderly ceremonial. Some-



thing confused, concerning the domicile of so many days, with some loose, rude, clumsy tinkering, and all is complete. There is no need to dally further on this portion of our little history. The details have no interest. The story is a very old one, as old as that first epithalamium in Eden. In the journals of the morning we are content to read, between the files of life entrances and exits, that "at the Church of St Dewlap, by the Reverend Alfred Hoblush, assisted by the Reverend Lucius Twirlpin, brother of the bride," two persons have been tinkered together, made happy or miserable, through the innocent instrumentality of those clergymen. That bald *affiche* suffices for us. Our sisters and she-cousins can supply for themselves the proper scenery and decorations.

Behind that bald scrap of news, which a base mechanic has put together with utter indifference, and will pull to pieces again before noon, lies a whole Arabian Nights' chronicle of joys and sorrows, of ups and downs, of shiftings, crossing immeasurable heights, unutterable depths,

and the best terrestrial copy known of heaven and of hell. Nothing in this world is so simple, nor yet of such tremendous power in either direction, and we, who sip our tea at breakfast, and let our eye fall upon the hymeneal column, and see for a second that Smith has been joined to Smith, and lose all thought of that union in the exertion of spreading butter upon toast, never think that for Smith and Smith have the dragons' teeth been sown, or the fruit of the tree of knowledge plucked, and the most tremendous venture staked. But this is but stale preaching at best. Week-day pulpits have rung with it before now. So let us just no more than whisper in strictest confidence that Mildrington, Esq., has been clandestinely married to a pretty foreigner somewhere in Scotland. Henceforth we shall see him in the matrimonial bagnes or galleys, with a fellow-captive linked to him.

With this piece of business the action of our little piece fairly begins. Something more stirring may now be looked for, for we have our hero, of whose character

the discerning reader will have now made a tolerable judgment, fast bound and inevitably committed to a new course of life, which perhaps may not fit him so well as his own fond imaginings had reckoned.

V.

BLOOM UPON THE RYE.

ABOUT this time then, No. 23, Magenta-road, was Mr Mildrington's residence, an edifice sumptuous in compo, and almost imposing in its stucco magnificence, but for the fact that it was multiplied as in a mirror exactly sixty-nine times over; for such was the number of the houses in Magenta-road. This uniformity—to be admired certainly under other circumstances—impaired the effect and general grandeur of No. 23, taken as a single residence.

There then, in all compo majesty, and when the splendour of their palace is considered, at a very moderate rent, dwelt Mildrington the Barrister and his new wife. Very elegant furniture had been got in, not by any means costly, but artistic; wherein the natural French taste

and foreign colouring of Mrs Mildrington broke out sensibly. Fairy chintzes, much light gilding, much airy bracketing, with a sprinkling of dainty little tables, and general gimcrackery, and perilous chairs, apparently of no strength, and utterly unequal to the human figure, with a patch of buhl and marqueterie here and there, gave so foreign an air and savour to the compo palace, that, looking from the window, you reckoned on seeing trees and cafés opposite, and rows of golden-tipped pagodas, with all the other scenery and properties of a boulevard; instead of which here was the dull barrenness of Magenta-road, and its fresh rhubarb-coloured clay, not yet consistent, rich and loamy as a new bride-cake. But it was known in their nuptial nonsense language as the Boulevard de Magenta.

Here then Mildrington began to live his new life, going out every morning to yoke himself for the day in his mill, which was down at the Chambers, coming back for dinner and lighter evening work. That disembowelling business of his did not by

any means grow slack, but increased in a steady ratio. The days, indeed, spun on very pleasantly. Mr Mildrington was in the habit of confessing to a firm friend or two, that he did not dream of this serious step of his bearing such agreeable fruit. He himself had doubts whether he could so readily settle down to the pure humdrum of domestic life; whether he could so readily shift from the gaudy extravaganza of society, all light, and brilliance, and spangles, to the plain fireside piece of Darby and Joan. But he found it very delightful so far; and relished—he the ex-stylites of Chambers—this new walk hugely. The little miniature lady, in her new capacity, was very interesting to him, something more interesting indeed than a new and attractive little case; she went about her small duties—light enough in all conscience—of provisioning and store-keeping, in a serious responsible way that amused him. In the evenings she told her day's adventures, and little cares; Mr Mildrington laughed, read his newspaper luxuriously, laughed again, and plunged

down into his study to disembowel briefs with his usual savagery. And this life repeated itself, in a cheerful round, for some four or five weeks. The music of the silver bells filled the house all day long, and had not as yet lost tune. Sometimes indeed he detected on her face a thoughtful downcast air ; surprising her as he entered suddenly—with the saddest and most mournfully ruminative look upon her face—as if she had been entertaining unpleasant company in the way of thoughts. This he did not relish ; for he had an idea that for such delicate brain-gear as hers, all such grist as serious reflection was too heavy and clogging. She however did not ever give him time to protest ; for she was on her feet in an instant, had cleared her little tiny forehead in a flash, and had driven the whole thing from his mind by a whole Catherine-wheel of showering and sparkling chatter.

As to friends—when Mildrington was preparing to lose himself in the great impenetrable compo country, he waved them a cheerful farewell from the edge of the

plaster Sahara. He knew well they would not care to follow him into such latitudes. But as these relations were mainly of that forced and languid growth which requires ball-room, hot-houses, and an artificial wax-light atmosphere, the sacrifice did not cost him very many pangs. To say the truth, he had but *endured* such intimacies, and only so far as he found them a useful element in particular purposes of his. Perhaps at one time he had gone out with the view of shuffling loose fashionable components through a sieve, hoping that by that process, pursued diligently and scientifically, a precious pearl might drop down at his feet. Once for a very short span, he had found some pleasure in that game of heiress spearing, but presently dismissed it as unworthy. He had always relished good society, not for good society's sake, but as useful agency for rendering himself sweeter and more acceptable to that dear mistress of his, the profession of the law. Besides he knew that he had but to plunge his spade into this fresh compo soil, and turn a social sod or two, and he would find



plenty ready at his hand. This early post-nuptial span was for him a very happy season; and it is likely he was viewing all things through a gorgeous Magenta medium.

VI.

HONEY AND TREACLE MOONS.

HERE is a diagram, or short sketch, of their daily life. By six in the morning Mr Mildrington had descended to earth, and was bravely buffeting the waves of a small fresh water sea; doing fierce battle with the raw element—of frosty mornings specially; then chastising his flesh by prodigious friction and general towelling. Then he went abroad into the morning air, and there being actually a kind of raw fag-end of compo town which poked itself into real green fields, made briskly for this point, and drew a breath or two of spurious country air, then posted home to breakfast, where he found the empress of his tea already upon her throne—her little face hidden in clouds of grateful incense. That despot, Mildrington, forbade an urn, as

being a rude, inartificial engine ; but was enthusiastic for the simple block-tin kettle of lower life. He was nice and particular about his tea, and once or twice verged upon pettishness when the mysterious organization of the pot, unequal to the strain of repeated application, broke down unexpectedly, and resulted in pale thin infusion, for the laws which regulate the chemical affinities of this fluid are as yet hopelessly undetermined, and the chapter of discreditable failures attests the lamentable uncertainty of this familiar operation. He had an odd notion about the measure of his second cup, which was to be gauged with extremest nicety ; say three quarters and an eighth full. This used to divert them both exceedingly. Then he skimmed the cream and essence of the news, and helped her to it across the table in tiny spoonfuls. It was "extrait double" of the journals, but done scientifically, suited exactly to her palate, and performed with a ready despatch. Then he got his disembowelling knife, and rioted for a short span among the briefs, snatch-

ing hurried samples here and there before he sat down to the full and regular meal at Chambers. Then he stepped away smartly through the causeways of new compo, and was presently down at St Dunstan's, or before His Honour the Right Hon. Sir Palmer Woodcock, moving in that heavy case of Pipchins Minors, or before the Lord Justice Buzzard, in the protracted suit of Whichelo's Trusts, into which Mr Mildrington had been "taken," some year or two before, in the room of a poor worn-out junior, who had actually shed his brains in slow showers over his brief. When it was transferred to Mildrington he found the cerebral matter strewn in small marginal splashes and side notes over every page of the monster. To him, who had no such notions of flinging his life away under the wheels of any briefed Juggernaut, it came merely as so much pleasant steaming under easy sail; for he saw the laughable and yet most melancholy folly of that philosophy which purposely wears out life in a struggle to sustain life. There are some foolish crea-

tures of the swine tribe who, when cast into the water, paddle desperately, and so keep themselves afloat, yet by the action of their paws so tear and abrade their throats that death comes by loss of blood. No, Mildrington was no legal suicide.

Having made then a good day's work of Whichelo's Trusts, which was henceforth as a small annuity to him, and "moved" in the matter of Pipchins Minors, and done battle for hours in regard to the taxation of Dumpty's costs, which Humpty (on the other side) thought unreasonably high, it was time for him then, towards five o'clock, to go home to compo land, which he did briskly enough, to be in time for a little joint exercise before dinner. That meal was of a light Palais Royal character, being looked to personally by Mrs Mildrington, whose foreign rearing stood to her wonderfully in this respect. Her taste blossomed out daily in little elegancies, in dainty preparations, which took Mr Mildrington by surprise and gratified him—albeit no gourmand—exceedingly. After all, the heart and

stomach are neighbours. But your gross joints—your crude junks of meat, which roll from the kitchen daily in a sort of cooking lottery ; now dry and hard, now moist and stringy, now utterly unaffected by the chemical alteration of fire ; these war feasts always affected Mr Mildrington painfully, and the presence of these crude masses of flesh meat had invariably the effect of taking away all desire of eating. There was usually set on, too, a wine of delicate vintage, of the date and price existing before tariffs were modified ; before too free trade had carried away all dams and flood-gates, and flushed the land with crimson-coloured vinegar. After that came a tiny cup of coffee, and after that a *chasse*, as in Paris ; and by that time the drawing-room had become illuminated with softened moderateur light (in the compo country strong smelling parafin lamps were in great favour, together with literature of the “ Reason Why ” and “ Inquire Within ” order, whose precepts for making all things at home—wines, card-board trays, and utilizing snail shells into small orna-

mental cats for the chimney-piece, are very valuable); and the fire had been trimmed up and made suitable for sitting at. Mr Mildrington absolutely basked and revelled in this softened light and warmth. There was a broad Sybarite code to be tracked through his constitution. Here would he read tit-bits from evening journal or new book, and was very happy. If it was gala night, and had she been a good little pet, and promised a treat, there was a cab sent for, and the pair were trundled away to opera or play. But this was rare; for some way towards eight or half-past, Humpty *v.* Dumpty, or Whicello's Trusts, intruded themselves importunately, and took him down-stairs with them until past midnight. This was about the exact mould or matrix of Mr Mildrington's life; each day coming out the exact copy of the day previous.

How Mrs Mildrington filled in the hours of her existence has not been so precisely ascertained. Perhaps she embroidered screens and slippers; perhaps she perforated whole furlongs of petticoat

bordering for gratuitous exhibition in the thoroughfares; perhaps she dressed a little, shopped a little; perhaps prayed a little; perhaps read French novels and the Gospel, according to Dumas the younger. She was of a delicate French texture we must recollect, and, therefore, *devote*. She was French, and perhaps not too nicely squeamish. These things are mysteries. The ways and works of women lie not so directly on the surface. What items make up their business and absorbing toil, so mysteriously without result, are utterly impenetrable. Where men dig, they burrow. Let no man be so rash as to move for a return of their labour. But this is certain, that she filled many pages of foreign post paper, and mailed heavy despatches to her foreign relations long since returned to their own country. A very tiny little hand too, quite harmonious with her organization; such as a sister of Tom Thumb should write. Certain too that she was the same piquant miniature and sparkling child; the same perfect flesh and blood *carte de visite* which Mr Mil-



drington had put into his book on the very first day. As yet he heard the silver clinking in the bell to the full as melodious as ever. It must be a poor musical instrument that will not keep in tune for a month or two. The fortuitous concourse of atoms does not often result so happily. But this was all during that early span when wedded lovers are turned loose in their Fool's Paradise, and when the moon is in her honey and treacle quarters, a span no longer than a month or so. The domestic man was a new character for him, and would be amusing enough for a few weeks.

VII.

COUNTER MINES.

THE newest and latest shape of that delightful toy, the stereoscope, is a large case or peep-show, to which the pleased visitor applies his eyes; and by the simple action of turning a handle, dances from Cornhill to Cairo, from Canterbury to the Boulevard des Italiens ("Vue instantanée"), from Sackville-street to the awful presence of the Sphinx. Indeed, I believe for the small outlay of some twenty-two pounds or thereabouts, you may peep into every corner of the earth that is decently accessible to photographic intrusion. The reader's eye is now applied to such an instrument. But a few minutes it was resting on a sort of nuptial slide; now we turn the little winch, and in a second are hundreds of miles away, peering in on a

chamber of the palace, where her Assyrian Majesty is sitting in state upon her throne. She is planning a new empire; she will put a crown upon her son's head, and get a princess for him; his foot shall be upon the necks of the country squires; their wives shall be the serfs and handmaids of his wife. All things are in train, and march prosperously. At this moment the princess is up-stairs, in a chamber of the palace, unconscious of the illustrious destiny in store for her; or, it may be, perfectly and entirely cognizant. The queen has actually intrigued her into a visit.

The queen's brain is alive with smaller schemes subsidiary to the grander scheme. She is writing letters—she is sending away despatches. But an hour ago, Corbel Jones, A.R.A., the well-known Gothic revival architect, has been favoured with an audience, and Lacaquer Burnish, the well-known worker of little elegancies in brass, according to the recent Puginistic canons, and who is held in such a just esteem for his mediæval flat candlesticks, and other freaks in metal, had latterly been coming

and going very frequently by royal command. The queen sat on her throne, elated and triumphant; and got ready her armies, and walked stately and with perfect certainty towards the completion of her grand scheme. A month or six weeks, or two months at furthest, and she would be singing *Te Deum* in her cathedral. "What has become of Mildrington?" the queen said one night to the princess, her daughter as she conceived her; "he has not been here for ten days."

Outwardly the princess conveyed that there was no reason on earth why such a speculation should be addressed to her. What was he, indeed, to the splendid Hecuba—though it was only proper that that splendid Hecuba should be a good deal to him. Inwardly however she had wondered more than once at this abstinence. Her ordinary spaniels, whip them ever so often, were sure to return. Perhaps whipping was her receipt to *make* them return.

"I wonder," said the queen, again, "what he can be about. I think," she added, artfully enough, "he must be afraid

of another battle. You were terribly severe on my poor son that night."

Miss Boleyn was now in her green room, with no audience; so she did not care to play a polite incomprehension. It would be poor sport practising on this poor elderly lady, with the boxes in all their linen coverings and no lamps lighted, so she said, "He did not care to put out all his strength; he did not care to speak so plainly as he would have done to a man."

"My dear," said the queen, "you are very clever—you *know* you are. I delight in seeing you punish the stuck-ups of the other sex—you do it beautifully; always excepting my poor son, Mildrington—I must beg him off."

Miss Boleyn smiled—she could not give quarter—and spared neither age nor sex. No; she had laid out secretly that the conceited warrior just alluded to must bite the dust on one more occasion. After that, she might be inclined to listen to any matters that might be put forward for a merciful consideration of his case. Such would be weighed in the proper

quarter. But in truth she rather longed for another opportunity of whetting her weapons, and thought with satisfaction of the excitement—the dust and tossing plumes of that agreeable fray.

“I shall write to him,” said the queen, going over to her royal Davenport, “and bid him come here to-morrow to dinner. Not that I expect he will; for he lives buried to his neck in a pit of odious cases. I believe, my dear, he loves them better than his own blood relations.” (Words artfully added to guard against alarm in the mind of the princess.)

At this moment enters a domestic of the palace with a note upon a salver. He does the accustomed homage and departs reverently.

“This is from Mildrington,” says the queen, with a smile—“how curious.”

She read to herself; then read aloud the following letter :—

“MY DEAR MOTHER,

“I have to go away to-night rather suddenly to the north, on some very

important business. It will interfere a little with my London professional business ; but, on the whole, I think it will be profitable to my interests. When I return, which will be in about a fortnight, I shall tell you all particulars.

“ Yours, P. M.”

Both the royal personages were disappointed. The queen showed her feeling of course ; the princess seemed more gay than usual — if anything, pleased. No matter, it would give the queen ampler time to mature her plans. The plot should ripen, and conquest be assured. All would go well.

Whither she is tending we now see perfectly. Whither Mildrington is hurrying off that night we are tolerably certain. One is building with a haughty security and complacent surety ; the other is leveling with a fatal and unerring certainty.

This mutual unconsciousness reaches almost to the level of farce. We who look down from above, like a Providence, and see the two in this serious business-like

fashion, thus working their own destruction, can almost smile. So when poor Santippy, whom we know well to live in a state of abject domestic helotry, shall talk boastfully, and by way of imperator, that he will *not* take Mrs Santippy to that foreign watering-place this year, we who have seen him shrink and wither away with fear under a conjugal scowl, nay, cower and writhe under the privately administered pinch—we, I say, can only smile.



PART III.

---

## IV.

## MISS BOLEYN.

It has been seen that Miss Marion Boleyn was on a visit to Queen Semiramis, and resident in that reigning lady's palace. Churstone Boleyn, Esq., M.P., and his lady, down at Churstone manor, though coming of the splendid Norman stock, and having a boisterous torrent of the true blue blood tumbling rampant through their veins, were still plain practical minds, and beside the flash and brilliance of their daughter, verged very nearly on the humdrum. Therefore the home they directed came but insipidly on Miss Boleyn. She was but ill placed in the heart of dead level prose—the prose of plain speaking

—plainer matter of fact—calling a spade a spade, and a joint a joint. It was but a *fade* theatre, and she might play *Madame Incomprise*, and *Dame Mystery*, and the *Æsthetic Muse*, and the *Grand Unintelligible* itself all night long, to a thin house, and a very dull, unappreciative bucolic company. She lived therefore, as it were, on circuit, and was welcome always at this country house and at that. Churstone Boleyn, Esq., M.P., for his part protested he never could comprehend the girl.

One time, too, Churstone Boleyn, M.P., was so unreasonable as to desire a very suitable alliance for his daughter; and on some imaginary encouragement from her, or at least without protest, actually invited the Honourable Thomas Salamander to the house. Honourable Thomas was a second son, yet still lovely among the sons of men; for he was practically an elder son—in fact, strictly speaking, older than his elder brother. For we know it is not age that constitutes an elder son. The Honourable Thomas came, unsuspecting youth, was received with artful warmth,

led into gins and pitfalls, and in two days was expelled the house under circumstances of indignity. There was naturally a coolness between Churstone Boleyn, M.P., and his daughter after this; and upon purely fanciful grounds, he began to entertain suspicions of what he called a low plebeian attachment.

Thus it was that Miss Boleyn was peripatetic the whole year round, and now buried temporarily in that London suburb, with the Queen Semiramis. To that potentate her society came gratefully enough—she sitting at the queen's feet, as it were, and pouring out her strange speeches. The other admired, though she could not always follow, or perhaps understand, but could relish that calm, placid, yet stinging tongue. The road between the suburb and London was not found long in such company, and to London did they very often repair for the customary traffic of ladies and for the high festivals of the period. At these latter meetings she cast back a blaze of reflected glory upon her queen; for the round expanding eyes were

commonly only centres for a circle of admiring men, whom she drew closer and repelled again, and scoffed at, and flouted, all for the purest sport. These poor un-winged moths, mostly scarlet chrysalis, only gathered the closer about her.

This was the routine during those few weeks that Mildrington the Barrister was compassing that clandestine business of his—speeding down to Scotland in his conspirator's cloak, with locomotive Hymen roaring and screaming before him, and scattering sparks through the night. So too, throughout shorter span, when he was lost—entombed, as it were, nuptially—in the great Bush country of compo, while the moons of honey, treacle, and perhaps hard yet toothsome toffey, came successively to the full. He had to be playing Coelebs—shamming bachelorship—which species of mumming galled him not a little.

How then was it faring with Queen Mildrington's pet scheme? Had she wisely and complacently resigned it, when she found it was pretty nigh impracticable?

That, we may not doubt, would have been only an effectual spur. Her despotic purposes were not to be thus thwarted by mean subjects and bondsmen. No, she was wiser in her generation, and saw that the pear was not yet ripe; not that it would *never* ripen, which is a conclusion absurdly inconsequential that many leap to when they find *their* pear not yet ripe. Meantime there was no need for headlong urgency; and was not here the precious fruit actually in her own hot-house, and under her own eye? Besides, she was as cunning as well as a dictatorial Empress Catherine; and all this while, we may be sure, is hatching some stroke suitable to her purpose—some sudden *coup d'enlèvement*. She will not sap, but will assault and carry.

We may wonder what secret speculation Miss Marion Boleyn—outside of these works, yet not unobservant with her observant eyes—held about these movements. Dreamily she took note of all things, as if in scornful pride that none of the world's little surreptitious tricks and manipula-

tions should escape her. Yet she put this question very often—"Where is our prince?" (so she called Mildrington); "why does he not come now?" But the elderly queen all this while held her peace, and made no forward movement, biding her time, and hearkened to this strange girl, and admired her, and preached to her long of the efficacy of that blue blood of hers, for which every day she should thank God. No ordinary puddle in those Churstone Boleyn veins!

In truth, Mildrington held away guiltily. He felt awkward at having to borrow a single man's garments every time he made the visit, whose ill fit might betray his secret.

## II.

## BALL-ROOM CROQUET.

THE queen and her princess went forth together to those war-feasts and war-dances, where the natives of all fashionable tribes assemble and make merry after the manner of their race ; to which celebrities repair also the elegant squaws in all the elegance of paint, and feathers, and tattoo, bringing with them their tender piccaninies. Among such we must count that old Lady Twinepecker, before mentioned ; the Shapely Perkinses, the Toler Blands, and other fashionables of distinction. And it must not be concealed that our queen dowager was held by the uncharitable to be bursting with a secret joy at thus ventilating her nobility in the atmosphere she so loved, behind the screen or mantelet of a tender virgin who must be amused.

It was wonderful that the tender maid herself should care to mingle with a herd she so despised. Perhaps she found it kept her armoury from rusting. See her a moment at say Lady Twinepecker's, seated on an ottoman, with the old pensive dreaming air, but with finger on the string of her crossbow, and on the trigger of her revolver.

At the game of croquet was Miss Boleyn singularly skilful. Not so particularly at the pleasant little apparatus of hoops, and particoloured balls, and bats; harmless instruments indeed in their original function, and but too often wrested to unworthy flirting artifices; though in this necessary accomplishment, and perhaps in its perversion too, she could take her part with credit. But it was in a game of a higher moral purpose, a species of croquet by metaphor, where the elements were all human, that she took delight. She loved to play it in places of fashionable resort, across drawing-rooms and dinner tables; in the very heart of balls and parties she sent her balls skim-



ming. Balls too that were particoloured according to strict rule—clerically black, of a tarletane white, of a military scarlet, and a fatal and decided green, common to all the professions alike. These miserable constituents of the game were to be found in only too great plenty, and were actually proud at receiving the strokes of Miss Boleyn's bat. The wretched spheres flew skimming under her blows.

Most of all did she relish the *roquet* trick, borrowed from the policy of that famous dog who once resided in a manger. For the art of it, as professors well know, lies in securing your own success and safety first, and in then selfishly damaging poor lagging foes, who are making a little creeping way, and saving themselves with difficulty. Ruthlessly did she "roquet" away these red and blue, and, above all, these green balls, which came foolishly trundling over the carpet to her feet. One smart stroke and they have flown for the night into Erebus!

For this wholesome exercise she goes forth into that jumble of crowded popula-

tion, unwholesome air, loud music, lights, flowers, and violent Dervish exercise, which is called society. Can we suppose that to a mind of her order, these traditional and accepted gewgaws could give pleasure? They overlaid a sort of dramatic action, and were therefore tolerated; and it was for the dramatic action that she went abroad.

See her at her favourite game of human croquet, holding her ball-room bat in her kid-gloved hand, and sending the balls rolling over the waxed floor. The scene is at Mrs Windermere's well-known evening party, for which but a select number of invitations have been issued; the time, about midnight; and Pistoni's well-known drawing-room orchestra is winding forth the touching "Valse Frangipani," the newest and sweetest thing out. This front chamber has a quiet solitude of its own; there is a decent tranquillity; it is furnished respectably, and consistently with the established canons of society. Its tenants are of mature age, and sensible rational deportment.

But from this haven a glimpse is obtained through the archway of a blazing chamber beyond, where Pistoni and his "Valse Frangipani" are rampant, and where heated men and women are flying round in the lawful measure of the period. The recurring heads in pairs flit by and are gone in a second to flit by again. Endlessly revolving white ties! It is the lunar cycle brought home to the meanest intellect by a happy illustration; for each pair revolves upon its own axis, and at the same time moves round a common axis. Wind on, Pistoni! from your musical corner—the levelled cornet often brushed by whisking dress. At what number stands the thermometer in the shade in this fiery chamber? How many beats of the pulse by the fashionable physician's stop-watch? So does the noble lady of the mansion virtually treat her guests to something besides food, shelter, light, and music. Possibly they come there for that new species of bath now in vogue, on gratuitous terms. Some one talks of the strange effect of stopping one's ears and

looking on at dancing; but this strange festival—now become a second nature—to a new comer must have the oddest effect.

See Mrs Windermere, mistress of the mansion, trailing through her apartments with young Goodchild, of the Household Brigade, and other candidates in her train. Unconscious children of war! Precious and select corps—on them rests the matron's eyes with a benign and almost swimming approbation. The kindly juices of our nature are stirred by their presence. Young Goodchild, suckling Guardsman, has signified his wish to be made known to that striking-looking person on the ottoman. Miserable youth! It is too strong meat for babes: she will make of you one of her croquet balls. She is waiting for him joyfully. Let the accustomed form be gone through. Mrs Windermere passes away. The large eyes dwell on him a moment with admiration. Not often have our women of the herd angels of the chief scarlet corps picking them out in this fashion. There is Cream

of the Cream ; so is there Scarlet of Scarlet. Surely this is too great condescension. Sometimes the cat plays in an amusing manner with the captured mouse before she—snaps it up.

### III.

#### YOUNG GOODCHILD'S ROUT.

THE figure lay out beside her, disposed upon the ottoman, in graceful lounge.

"I must defraud you of your dance," said the youth, posturing afresh with languid ease. "I can't do the thing—I break down under it. Pray 'scuse the harmless *roose*. I want a little rest ; 'pon word I do. Let us talk—do now."

"Ah, yes !" she said, "why not ? why should you be called on to waste *your* energies, moral and physical, and which may become so precious by concentration, in compliance with the unmeaning forms of society ?"

"Ah, you speak divinely—'pon word divinely," said he, now delightfully communicative. "*You* understand me ! Positively I am plagued with those people

who give parties—‘women of the house,’ they call them, who want to drag me to other women, to take them out to exercise.”

“Most unfair,” said she of the large eyes, “a person in *your* position should be compelled to waste your intellectual gifts on a mere dancing *canaille*. All the world can dance—but not talk.”

“No, no, no! Come, now, Miss Boleyn, you flatter me, now; ’pon word you do. But I must make a stand somewhere you know.”

“Oh, you must make a stand somewhere,” she said, with a laugh that always betokened danger. “And now where is that exact point? It would be worth making a note of, Colonel—, Colonel—? forgive me, I have forgotten your name.”

“Goodchawld!” he said, turning red, and in much confusion.

“Goodchild! Any relation to the fairy of that name?”

“I—aw—don’t understand you. I—aw—don’t know who you mean.”

“No, that could scarcely be expected.

A dry historical allusion. I am unreasonable. Don't you recollect—in the story books? You may be a lineal descendant; and there is a strange dreamy spirituality in your conversation which almost justifies the supposition. Seriously, did you ever hear it talked of in your family? Is there a fairy ancestor down in the 'Landed Gentry?'"

The youth of the elegant Household Corps looked at her with disquiet. His security was a little disturbed; yet she looked serious and in perfect earnest. "Fairy arncestar?" he said; "how droll! 'Pon my word, Miss Boleyn, I don't see it exactly. Why should you think that?"

"O," said she, "there was the Industrious Apprentice—Hogarth's Industrious Apprentice—in the Great Book of Engravings. *He* might have been in the direct line."

"Apprentice?" said the youth, again doubtful and in great agony.

"You know there were two;" she went on, solemnly: "One, Thomas Idle, had to be sent to sea, and ended disreput-



ably. Don't be alarmed," she added, laughing, "we have nothing to do with him. But the other, the virtuous one, proceeded steadily, was taken into partnership, married his master's daughter, and finally became Lord Mayor of London ! There was a destiny ! Is your stock of the virtuous Goodchilds ? Take care."

The present Goodchild of the Household Brigade began to colour and move uneasily on his seat. The air began to grow thick and heavy with ridicule, and he found a difficulty in breathing. "I don't understand," he said—"aw !—Miss Boleyn ; and if you get once into history"—

"That would be too unreasonable," she said, smiling. "Already *your* intellect—overtasked as it is—has too much to bear. Consider the frightful strain ! Consider that you hold it in trust for others as a precious deposit. As you before remarked, you *must* make a stand somewhere."

Now flies up a wandering Zingaro of the dance, who has been distractedly questing a partner for the Headlong Tar-

antella, now rife. It is against rule to rush singly into the tumult; and yet the galop carnival is at its wildest. The musical quickstep, impudent "Grotesque," or other popular war dance, inspiring the lower limbs of the unemployed with spasmodic twitches. The air—diverted for a span into soberer by-ways—just strikes back into the original Dervish dance; and with a fresh impetus, the fashionable Feejee Whites, lagging a little, fly round again with maniacal fury. Dancing Zingaro, grown nearly desperate with lagging, stands before Miss Boleyn, and wistfully supplicates her to be his for the Taran-tella. She assents with graciousness, and rises. "Alas!" she says to the elegant soldier, who is gazing up at her with a sort of stupefaction: "*We*—that is I—and poor common natures, *dare* not set ourselves above the ordinary laws. Balls have their duties as well as their rights; and the 'woman of the house,' as you so happily styled her, will allow no exceptions in the case of the common herd. With you it is *far* different! Ah! how I envy

you. Vain to imitate—useless to condemn! Come.”

With a sweet smile, she vanishes. Life Guardsman left shipwrecked on his ottoman, as on a rock, gaping after her. He felt that there had been no veneration, to say the least, in her dealing with him. Nay, there was left underneath an uncomfortable impression, that this skilful lady had, with much refinement, been scoffing at him politely; perhaps, was etching him out, with a few hasty strokes, for panting Zingaro.

The much admired Pistoni, and his melodious crew, are now at it energetically. Artists of singular and enduring powers, how marvellously they work that Giga measure of their “Grotesque.” A musical measure conceded to be vulgar, impudent, *effronté*, and brazen, yet unmatched, and infinitely popular. As Pistoni and his Orpheans lead off, even dowager limbs begin to twitch convulsively. Those elderly war-horses begin to snuff the battle from afar. Pistoni’s surely

the *violon du diable*; for it sets this steaming, flustered, disordered humanity plunging round, possessed by some Terpsichorean demon. How they riot—what sounds of wild collision—of swift, sharp brushing of dresses—of headlong tear and rended muslin! What wreck of flowers, and torn streamers, and crash of shattered fans. *N'importe. En avant!* Round and round any way, at any cost, all to the riot of this “Grotesque Galop.”

This Colonel is only a type. Many more of his fellows she sacrifices on the same altar. Their innocent blood flows over the waxed floor. Under her delicate glove—*fabrique de Jouvin*—she keeps her sharp feline claws curled up—this much admired Angola cat. She threw out her line and baits on the surface of the fashionable pools, and the greedy fry rose at once. Then she drew them back with a sharp cruel twitch, and the hook was left sticking in their gills. And was this woman marked, shunned, and a solemn league and bünd sworn against her? Nay, these

poor gudgeons, by some mysterious fascination, came paddling round and round, in narrowing circles, and rose at fresh hooks, and broke away once more with sadly mangled gills.

IV.

DINNER CROQUET.

WE should see her, too, among women where she could be more fairly matched. For these poor men are taken at a sad disadvantage. *She* had impunity. But with the ladies of her own guild, who neither give nor take quarter, it was a more serious business. Those defensive, yet negative bits of armour, are common to all, even the weakest. We know what effectual shields and headpieces can be made of a cold disdain, a calm overlooking, a placid majesty, nay, even of the sheerest silence, when one of the sex would lay her sister in the dust. It is the eye and the deportment that work the slaughter of the drawing-room.

In the Vehmgericht of after dinner—at those mystic Eleusinia, where the ma-

trons and vestals sit round, busy with rites which no male eye durst look on : while the warriors of the tribe are below quaffing the fire-water—at such meetings had Miss Boleyn to engage at fearful odds. She was not of *that* society. It is known, that on such sisters as are found too sprightly, and reaching to the satirical—too fond of wrestling with the men—a mark is set. The white cross is upon their doors. After dinner the society of one sex drifts away from them imperceptibly ; so with Miss Boleyn.

Mrs Wander Wynne, the Honourable Mrs Clayton Ringtail, Lady Mantower, Lady Mary Grayplover, with other noble dames, are sitting in secret Vehmgericht, while their chiefs carouse below. Their robes blossomed out luxuriously in monster flowers of rich glacé and moiré Victoria Regias. Among them was Miss Boleyn : but not of them. To her, they debated with closed doors. They had seen her, while the courses shifted, jousting with the men ; they had seen those temporary mates, whom the laws of dinner

wedlock had joined to them, giving way to a certain distraction ; peeping round the corner of an intrusive epergne to get a view ; in fact, turning unfaithful. These are the unpardonable sins. She destroyed the peace of dining wedded life. Her deep full eyes were loadstars, and her tongue's sweet air drew all things to her. Deep eyes, indeed ! " Boopis ! " said a Homeric gentleman to his neighbour. Alas, I say again these are the unpardonable sins ! for which vengeance is taken in another state. That state is the drawing-room.

She always knew what the matrons—gentle souls—plotted for her. They would scalp her if they could decently—those gentle squaws. Their eyes lighted up fiercely with the joy of anticipation. They would sacrifice her on the altar of the ottoman, while the chiefs drank below. Every hand was against her. She had no friend among the women. She would be at their mercy for three-quarters of an hour ; yet, mark how she fared.

Position is half of the battle ; so she



would march straight into the very heart of them, and seat herself, not meanly on the outskirts, where the gates might come at last to be politely shut in her face ; but, boldly, on the royal tabourets, actually cheek by jowl with great Lady Mantower. That potentate would be much discomposed at this profane contiguity. But there she was, a courageous intruder, in the centre of the female satraps. The advantage of position is immeasurable. Still she can be overlooked, politely ; unseen, politely ; unheard, politely. These are sure and deadly weapons ; yet, mark our skilful Miss Boleyn. On the first hint of this game she has sprung back, and is *en garde*. Poor, unthinking Lady Mantower *would* overlook her. There had been some awkward dealings at a foreign watering-place, between the lovely Alice Mantower (ætatis, said the grossly malicious, eight-and-thirty, or in the hazy mists of that period), and young Paget Parker, a wealthy minor. Resulted then an ugly *esclandre*, and hurried interference of guardians ; but as yet the transaction was

buried at the opening of the Black Forest. It had not yet travelled to Frankfort. But she brought it all on her own old head. Says Miss Boleyn, calmly, "When do you go abroad again, Lady Mantower. You were at Baden this year?" Lady Mantower smiles off direct answer, and has a question for Lady Mary Grayplover; yet has a sense of trouble and uneasy foreboding at her ancient heart. "Or was it Homburg," the cold quiet voice goes on, "yes, it was Homburg; my cousin was there at the same time." *Grace, je me rends*, is in the veteran's eyes; the old soldado of the drawing-room knows that she is in her enemy's power, and kneels for mercy. These of the Old Guard can find a victory even in defeat. Miss Boleyn was generous. How the veteran then chattered to her, and smeared her with the balsamic lubricant of flattery!

But when the chiefs came up from their gourds and calibashes, trickling in, as it were, in twos and threes, with doubtful, uncertain step, as is the fashion of chiefs when bedewed with fire-water—

then the triumph, and the glory, and the vindication, of Miss Boleyn set in. The conflux of male atoms was insensibly in that one direction—the higher lands were left dry and sterile. The refreshing masculine streams flowed by them all, and eddied tumultuously about the feet of the enchantress.

This was the apotheosis of Miss Marion Boleyn. Out of her seeming confusion came her crown. So did she confound their politics—frustrate all their knavish tricks.

V.

CALLED TO COURT.

THAT under-paid day-labourer, Mildrington, is at chambers, or down at Court, or else tramping it along the fashionable highways, when X, the undistinguishable unit of society, the mention of whose actual name would not help any one to a clearer notion of his personality—stops him, and holds him fast by the button. It might have been a wigged ancient mariner for that matter—one of the gowned guild.

“I am most sincerely and unaffectedly sorry to hear it,” says wigged mariner, condolingly, “most unaffectedly sorry; I hate to hear of these break-ups. The fine old stock, and all the rest of it. It is a great pity.”

“What do you mean?” said Mildrington, swinging his bag uneasily; and he

swung unconsciously in that bag the hopes and interests, weal and woe (neatly engrossed), of widows, minors, and panting *cestui que trusts*.

"I hear the Grange is in the market," Mr X says—"a great pity. All that and those, the lands, tenements, and hereditaments, with all the easements, &c., thereunto belonging. So I am told, at least."

Again the minors swung nervously. "It must be a mistake," he said.

"No," persists X, "the present tenants have just given it up. You may depend upon my news as accurate;" and Counsellor X flies away, with inflated robe, after a passing solicitor, whom he is presently seen embracing, and even fondling tenderly. They are the legal salt of the earth, and precious even as elder sons.

This piece of intelligence disturbed our Stoic a good deal. It rose up at times between him and Sir Palmer Woodcock, whom he was addressing. It came as a sort of shock, and seemed to shake a little of the bloom from off the rye. In fact, so long as the bloom continued on that sort

of cereal, these matters could stand without detriment. Nay, they came in pleasantly into the picture. But now it jarred. No matter : what availed this vile heraldic cant—this faith in old barns, because they are old and tottering ? Is not bran-new plaster, and red brickery, and fresh paint, just as good—nay, better, when purchased by honest toil ? Was there not that novel distich, invented but yesterday, “ Work makes the man ; want of it, the fellow,” and the rest ? So home to work, and dismiss the thought from the labouring mind.

It is of a Saturday evening ; and it just occurs to him, between the courses of his legal banquet, that he must, for pure decency’s sake, renew those visits to the suburb, latterly fallen into sad arrear. *Satis lusisti* ; we have eaten and drunken to satiety. It is time for business again. We must look to these main chances again. To-morrow is the recurring Sunday ; with it shall be resumed the old usage.

While our legal miller is thus busy—perhaps not too diligently of this evening—tramping it round mechanically, and for

the first time, perhaps, since the bloom got upon the rye, feeling a sense of disquietude and uneasiness, there enters to him one of the poor drudging Hecates, who are affiliated to these congregations, with news, that a lady—as it seemed to her, unaccustomed to such things, a divine emanation, enthroned in a golden brougham—was waiting below to see him. Possibly a beautiful and persecuted lady, come, with all her papers with her, in the golden brougham, to cast herself at his legal feet. This falls within the dramatic business of the Theatre Royal, Chancery. No; an elderly lady. No; fine looking. She had seen her here once before. It was clear. It was the Queen Semiramis, in her car, come from her palace to visit him. This took him by surprise, and even troubled him. For, standing as he was over a little keg of powder, anything unusual, or out of the common walk, seemed to be immediate announcement that all had blown up.

The noble lady was sitting up, solemnly stiff, framed in a window of the brougham.

Yet on this day, Mildrington took note of a good-humoured halo—an unusual rose of beauty under her bonnet—which surprised him. It was not the grim Elizabeth which he might ordinarily have looked for, but a beaming dowager—Maintenon. This royal visit, too, into the heart of Legal Alsatia and Seven Dials, was, in itself, a wondrous condescension, up to that date barely even heard of.

“Get in—shut the door—I want to talk to you. I haven’t disturbed you? There, we are quite comfortable.”

(Mildrington was by no means comfortable.) But the hair of his Damocles’ sword was not yet to be cut. She went on to ask, would he be free to-morrow—Sunday: could he come to her early, to breakfast—say by eight o’clock—she wanted him particularly, for a little expedition—no matter what now—no matter where now—she would tell him to-morrow. Relieved exceedingly, Mildrington was wholly at her service. Nay, suffused in a manner by that unexpected thaw—that break-up of the old perennial ice-crust—an idea



seized on him for a moment, what if he took that opportunity, in that curious little confessional, to break his story to her. To-morrow would be the best. There was an inappropriateness in that strict little chamber.

There was much wonder and speculation, we may be sure, that night in the lighted drawing-room of Magenta-road, where the pair were sitting; much calculation, with a good deal of something like rehearsing. A deep conjugal conspiracy was entered into for exploding their secret, into the very bosom of the maternal empress. Mr Mildrington condescended to throw out hints of the manner in which he would handle the business. It was time, he said, that this guilty hole-and-corner sort of life should end. It was not right, morally speaking, in regard to that parent, the only parent he had; she ought to be put in full possession of the facts without further delay. Besides he felt personally degraded by this sort of acted hypocrisy. Heaven knows he had no reason to be ashamed of what he done.

At which noble speech the foolish little woman began to feel a dimness in the eyes, and was affected with a flood of love, gratitude, veneration, and all the gentle emotions towards her splendid lord and master. He was grand in her eyes that night. All was to go well under that magician's manipulations. This was to be the last night they should carry their millstone. By to-morrow night the bones of that grim skeleton in the cupboard, should be huddled into a box and thrown out. There should be a dramatic reconciliation. Possibly when he had done his work, he might return hastily, and hurry her in a cab to the feet of the empress, who was to welcome her graciously and with words of kindness. So she had best be ready, decently attired. So these conspirators hatched their little plot together, until near midnight. A pleasant time of hope and anticipation, and seemed no longer than an hour. But this was when the bloom was still upon the rye.

## VI.

## THE GRANGE.

MILDRINGTON did but little real earnest disembowelling that night; and did not get very well into the marrow of Humpty and Dumpty.

With the morning however he was away and in good time for breakfast, finding his parent equipped and ready for travel. For the established ritual of the day, neither affected any prudish anxiety, but cheerfully sacrificed their fashionable herding for prayer, and the customary didactics of the clergyman. Perhaps it was just as well. Again would Mildrington's pew have been his privy council; and it is to be feared that Mrs Mildrington would have but further fortified herself in the structural and comparative anatomy of bonnets. So they stepped

into the brougham, unsanctified, and were driven away.

"I am going to bring you down to Mildrington," she said, gaily enough. "We shall make a regular day of it. How long is it since you have been down here—fifteen years, I believe?"

It was some such span, Mildrington recollected. He had gone during some of his Oxford vacations, and the scent of its new-mown hay was sweet in his nostrils ever since. After that it had been let—profaned by the foot of the stranger.

"Why," said he, in amazement, "I was just about to ask you has it not been sold, or is it about to be sold?"

"Sold!" Mrs Mildrington repeated, with scorn. "Who shall sell it? Who thinks of selling it? And yet, perhaps, it will soon pass out of *my* hands. But I will tell you about this by-and-by."

"It was a mere report," said the son, much relieved—almost exhilarated. That little cloud had passed away. True, there was the sword, the ugly sword, suspended even from the ceiling of the first-class

carriage ; but later on, when the shadows had well fallen, he would tell his story—his little secret. Leave it to his persuasive tongue. A Rolls motion was often a more delicate business. After all, it was not so pleasant carrying about a lump of lead in one's breast.

“Do you recollect it ?” she said (they were now imprisoned in a first-class carriage, skimming down northwards), “the Bowles” (they were the late tenants), “treated it sadly.” On this theme of Mildrington Grange did she enlarge prodigiously, and with an enthusiasm that surprised her son. The time was marked off as each station flew by, and the morning wore on till eleven o'clock.

“This is like last year, again,” said Mrs Mildrington, looking over the country ; “it reminds me of our old Sundays. That was before this vile law had entirely taken possession of you.”

Again, this sort of affectionate retrospect was not customary with Mrs Mildrington. Her son, though usually above any little

weaknesses of the kind, did indeed feel something like a twinge.

"It is very hard to find time for anything now," he said, "I have not a moment I can call my own."

This was not strictly accurate; but there is often a confusion between mere inclination and power, though he made it a habit to trample out all emotional feeling, as hurtful to the balance of his grand system. On this occasion he owned to the weakness of making an entry in his mental note-book, to devote a Sunday or so to filial matters.

"Come," said he, with a certain cheerfulness, "we shall begin the old ways again. It is only burning a brief or two, or getting up an hour earlier."

They were at the station now, where a carriage was waiting. The name of the station was Hornby, and this place lay some two miles from Hornby. They made the distance in half an hour, and drew up at an ancient gateway. Mr Mildrington had not, by any means, forgotten it, and

looked out curiously as they drove up the avenue.

"It seems well kept enough," he said. "These Bowles were not such bad tenants."

Scarcely, if theirs had been that decent trimness of the walks, the shaven smoothness of the demesne, the neat beds of flowers, and utter absence of that Augean complexion which is the normal condition of avenues about the fall of the leaf.

The house was of the old English pattern—red brick through and through—pippin-cheeked, with a rich natural glow, and no plaster cosmetics. It was made up of blocks of this good sound material, a centre, and two burly wings; and a short bell-tower, for the pure accommodation of the rooks. It stretched away behind in innumerable blocks of offices, and hid a whole town behind its skirts. The trees were very old, and very thick and rusty, which are, after all, your true calendars and *Fasti* for ancient families. When Mildrington was last here, the place had run rather to dilapidation. Part had

been shut up. Something in the way of patching had been done when the Bowles came in ; but a radical repair was needed generally. The roof had shown signs of weakness ; the rooks' cupola hung over a little to one side, through rottenness of the timbers ; rubicund bricks, here and there, had rotted out ; damp had stolen in, and stained the flaming cheeks with a broad streak ; the glass was in mean little panes of the season of its original construction ; and the wood-work, generally, was thirsty for paint.

This was the mansion which he had looked at fifteen years before. As he now looked from the carriage-window, he saw another manner of palace. It was a glorified Grange now. The fairies and familiars of the building trades had poured down in clouds and left the tokens of their work behind. It flamed out in gorgeous decoration ; a new cupola for the gentlemen rooks, new paint, new bricks, new glass, and general restoration. Yet nothing offensively glaring ; no profane leveling and flaring substitution. Mildrington



was surprised—confounded would have been the true emotion, if he had allowed himself to yield to such a weakness.

“Let us go in,” said Mrs Mildrington ; and they went in.

With the established interior model for such edifices the public is well acquainted. Were real substantial buildings wanting, they have been contracted for, built, furnished, fitted up, according to the proper canons, over and over again, in the Thousand and One British Night’s Entertainment. In the novelist’s library is to be found the universal pattern—chambers baronial, mullions, oak, tapestry, groining—in infinite profusion. The wood and stone carvers, and embroiderers of romance, have a brisk business. It is scarcely worth while for another hand setting up in the business and competing with the rest. Mildrington Grange then was precisely according to the authorized formula.

VII.

THE BAIT.

SHE took him from room to room. It had been sumptuously decorated and re-furnished in the sham antique fashion: much gold, much rich cobalt strewn with stars, much brass-work, much new oak, coronas, fire-dogs, and what not. Expense had not been spared. A gorgeous shell that only wanted a fitting tenant corresponding in blood.

They went together into a sort of little studio or sanctum—the divinest chamber for a studious man—and seating herself in one of the rococo chairs, said—

“Do you know what all this is for?”

So astute a mind as Mildrington, trained to spell out a whole case from a mere hint at the beginning, could but have a foreknowledge of what was coming.

"It is very beautiful, very magnificent," he said; "it is like enchantment."

For one who had his emotions under such whip control, it was surprising what a flutter there was at his heart.

"Do you recollect that day when poor Miss Boleyn was with me—she whom you treated so badly?"

"Yes," said Mildrington; "I have been rather ashamed of myself since. I have repented of that misconduct ever since."

"Well," said Mrs Mildrington, speaking very fast, "forgiveness will not be so difficult to obtain—women are not so hard-hearted. In fact, I have a hint that, with suitable submission, all faults will be treated tenderly. Listen to me a moment," she went on, very earnestly, "I have long wished to speak to you very seriously. I am old; I cannot be with you now very long; but I have one wish I should like to see fulfilled. You know it."

"I assure you, dear mother—," said Mildrington.

"Listen to me for one moment; let

me finish. That girl likes you—likes you still—in spite of that strange treatment. Her brothers will give her ten thousand pounds more to her fortune. She has an aunt who will leave her as much again. You know what she has of her own. She has the best blood in England in her veins; fine connexions; and, as I said before, she will overlook your treatment of her. What do you want more?" she added, excitedly, "whom are you waiting for?"

Every word of this was as a screw twisting among the heart-strings of Mildrington.

"And now," she went on, "for what do you suppose I have brought you down here? You know what has been my earnest wish all my life. You know what I have worshipped: good blood, rank, good connexions, good name and family. To my creed, I may say, I have been faithful unto death."

Mildrington had a curious choking feel at his throat, and though a glib speaker enough before His Honour the Master of the Rolls, and the Vice-Chancellor, when

checked by any obstacles, still on the present motion, could not find a word. The fact was, he had a presentiment of what was coming.

“All you have seen to-day,” Mrs Mildrington went on, taking his hand, “is, I confess it, a bait or a bribe ; if you like, I want to *buy you*. I should be so happy if I only saw you—no, not married—any fool may marry—but married into a fine old country family, of the best blood in the kingdom. Mildrington, my dear child, is *yours*, as you see it to-day, with all its furniture and decorations, its broad lands, and domain—with money, too, to keep it up in all state—all on this one little condition. Marry this girl, Mary Boleyn, and it is all yours—all yours.”

He was confounded by this speech, though he had a presentiment of all that was coming. He knew well enough that blessings, far beyond what he ever dared to hope for, were about to be held out to him, but which he must refuse. He could only hesitate : he almost stammered—

“This is such a sudden thing, I really”—

"Your birth-day is coming on," she said. "This is a conditional birth-day gift. I know it is hard to force, as it is called, inclination; but you have gone beyond *that* age. There is nowhere such a chance—no one who combines such wealth, blood, and splendid connexions!" She went on, starting up, "what do you mean by this? You haven't the *folly* to be hesitating or considering?"

"But you should leave allowance, dear mother," he said, in an artificially smooth voice, for rage and disappointment were gnawing at his heart; "perhaps as much happiness may be found in a lower"—

"A lower what," she almost shrieked. "Don't talk that way—I don't want such language. I know the cant of the day about plebeian. Is it possible you can be such an—idiot as even to think twice about so splendid an offer. What do you mean? Speak out—don't worry me in this way."

He, tortured with a cruel vexation, and at the same time at his wits' end how to extricate himself, fell into words of

course, that reached almost to assent. "I am sure," he said, "mother, you have always found me ready to carry out your wishes. But I think, in so serious a matter, a delay of a few moments, or say a few hours, at least, is not much to ask. I am, I may say, a confirmed bachelor," he added with a smile—it is to be feared, a very false smile—"of bachelor tastes and habits ;"—what sort of bachelor tastes were those evenings in Magenta-road ?—"And it is difficult to make a sudden plunge into marriage without some reflection."

"To be sure, my dear child," she said, "as long as you please ; it is only reasonable. I am not an ogress of a mother : only, I thought this would be such a surprise for you. However, now my heart is at peace. But you should not agitate me with these scenes. Sir Harry says any excitement is very dangerous. See, feel me ; I am trembling all over."

"Don't think of it any more," Mildrington said, desperately ; "all will go well."

"I expect so," she said, coldly and

hardly. "But of course you are free, and can do as you please. Perhaps—but I couldn't believe *that* of you—you will never degrade me. If you have any unworthy match in your—anything about penniless virtue, and that sort of thing, I declare to you solemnly"—and here there was a curious savageness in her manner—"I shall cut—cut you off—house, lands, money, everything, with a shilling, and perhaps with my"—(she stopped suddenly)—"and endow an hospital or some charitable institute."

This sort of denunciation never had any effect on Mr Mildrington. On this occasion it brought him back his old defiance. The line "die and endow a college or a cat," rose instinctively in his brain, for all his mental associations were satirical, and came up, irrespective of the decencies of the situation. But he did not venture to utter it aloud; he only smiled.

"You have more sense, I am sure," she said, softening. "I am sure you will never cross your poor mother—old mother now. I have only your interest at heart.



You are my pride, and I wish to see you high in the world. After all, what does it matter. There is nothing worth fighting about on this earth. Think it over, my dear child, as long as you like, and I suppose we must not be very hard on you. Now let us go."

They drove away home together. The stately Semiramis was much softened, and spoke of motherly love, and her affection for her son, and the short time she had in all probability to stay in the world, and of other domestic themes, long strange to her hard, frozen lips. "We must see more of you, my dear child," she said; "you must be very lonely in those miserable chambers. What are those wretched guineas after all compared with health, happiness, and affections? You can make plenty of money when I have left you. Promise me you will let me see you often—*very* often."

"Certainly; to be sure, my dear mother," he said; the whirl of events of that day had quickened him into a filial and

unprofessional warmth : “ you may depend on me ; I shall *make* time.”

“ You must come and dine often—that will be the plan ; you must dine somewhere, you know, and go away after as soon as you please. We shall begin to-morrow.”

“ Well, to-morrow, yes,” he said ; “ but as a regular practice, I am afraid ”—

“ No matter, come to-morrow.”

It had nearly been carried by a narrow majority in Mr Mildrington’s exterior councils, to tell his whole story at that moment, out in a manly way. But he lost heart. Lost, too, an opportunity that never was to return. So they passed out from the little studio ; from the gorgeous nineteenth-century gothic of the chambers, out under the porch, entered the carriage, and drove away gloomily. Mr Mildrington taking his last glance at this destined birth-day gift.

## VIII.

## THE PITCHER GOING TO THE WELL.

THEN they travelled back homeward again, as the night fell, by first-class compartment and by brougham. As they draw near to her own door, artful Queen Mildrington says, "It is not worth while going home to those dreary chambers now; you shall stay and dine with me;" and the no less artful Mildrington almost blushes, as he thinks what sort are those chambers, and protests that he must go. Imperious Queen Mildrington holds it is nonsense, and says with authority that he must stay; at least—artful lady again!—must come up to the drawing-room for a few seconds, where she has her bait ready set. Her son thinks it not worth while to cross her in so slight a particular; and it

presently flashes on him that here will be famous opportunity after this dinner to bring out his secret, and win forgiveness; and yet he trembles at the notion. He will go up, and first write a note to his clerk—artful Mildrington—yes, to his clerk, about some little business. To be sure, said Queen Mildrington, and John shall take it to Dunstan's Inn. It would not answer that John should take it to the particular clerk that *he* had in view; so, on the whole, it does not make so much matter; it is not pressing. So now, upstairs after the queen—artful queen still—who all throughout that long day's travel has never dropped so much as hint or word, or spectrum of a word, if there be such a thing, of her thoughtful, round-eyed lodger.

We may turn back now to the melodious German ballad, a scrap of which sings in this history. That ghostly music was playing as our barrister ascended the stairs. The water rushed, the water swelled, and the fisherman kept gliding on to

the rocks. Better far had that fisherman gathered up his nets, or let nets and all derelict behind him, and paddled away.

“I have a little surprise for you,” said Queen Mildrington, entering first. “Come in !”

He was startled — confused ; not but that he had seen before that calm, tranquil figure rising from her foam of white muslin before now, but he had not reckoned on the apparition just then. Warm softened light from that artificial Cynthia, the moderateur, now at the full, played about her white figure. She lay back in an attitude of wonderful grace, reading, and the full, round eyes, lifted slowly, fell upon Mildrington entering, with the old, thoughtful, dreamy gaze.

Did she expect this new visitor, or had the skilful queen regnant planned this surprise on *her*, too, for special ends of her own ? These little secrets are not for you and me. It was unlikely, indeed, that the queen despot would dare to take her into the plot. What was he to that stately Hecuba ? At least that smooth, placid

face might be searched and questioned, with no earthly result. It was trained to tell no tale.

They passed down to dinner in the processional order which fashion and custom exacts. In that middle passage between drawing-room and dining-room, the gentler sex most eminently requires the aid of her natural protector. Mildrington "took down," as it is phrased, Miss Marion Boleyn, the queen following solitary in her own magnificence.

We might wish to know what was the tune and temperament of the hero's mind at this moment. The pictures which had been held to his eyes all day long, the voices that had been ringing in his ears, the gentle series of St Anthony's temptations, which had been trying him sorely, yet sweetly, the dissolving views which had now melted out, but would of a surety grow into shape and colour again, had strummed and twirled at his pulses, until he was all in a flutter of excitement. He had been living in a dream—a dream of danger, yet pleasant exceedingly; and

here was now the reaction, a subdued languor, a thoughtful melancholy, a thirsting for quiet reverie and reflection. In this vein he took the syren down to dinner.

We who by this time have an inkling of this man's character, may work out for ourselves the result of this new humour. The flashy artificial Mildrington was flung aside, as it might a dressing-gown, on to a chair. He did not care now to light up his society foot-lights, and work up to his traditional society acting. He was natural, unvarnished, unbuckramed, of this night.

And the syren? It was hard always to pierce to the depth of *her* moods and fancies; they were inscrutable to herself. But it is very likely that she thought that prolonged absence reached to a careless indifference which was not to be tolerated in the meanest creeping thing in the list of her subjects; for all men, of all kind and degree, were *her* subjects. Perhaps, too, he was now come back, at his own convenience and his own whim, and such independence was not to be tolerated.

Which of these feelings was at work, is not to be more than guessed at. Let us listen as Mr Deacon comes softly by our elbow, and reverently obtrudes this tender *hors d'œuvre*.

"You recollect," he said, "Miss Boleyn, our discussion that night over Mr Carlyle's body? I was intolerant then, and a gloomy bigot. What I could not relish myself, I am afraid I could not endure that others should relish. I have learnt more of the charities of toleration since."

"Indeed!" said Miss Boleyn with interest. He did not know that smile was but an ambuscade, nor did he see her drawing a little pet scourge from her pocket.

"Yes," said Mildrington, with innocence, "I am a convert—a convert to the established church of Carlyle. The scales have fallen from my eyes. Seriously I am a catechumen, and have been under instruction for a long time back."

"This is indeed interesting news," she said, in her "still waters run deep" man-



ner. "It is impossible to estimate the importance of such an accession too highly. The news should be spread abroad—the world shall be glad."

Mildrington laughed. He was in a gentle good-humour that night—subdued—not to be stirred into action by any stings. A spectral Mildrington Grange was floating before him, lit up, gorgeous, and in a glory of its own, with a legend over the door wherein figured his own name. He only laughed at this little stab.

"You do not forget," he said, "I can see what is in store for me. The vials of wrath shall be bursting on me all the night. You are strong, but be merciful."

"Spare the poor convert!" she said, with one of those sneers in ambush.

Again Mildrington laughed.

(Mr Deacon at his elbow—"Por-sherry-clart?")

"Claret, please!) Yes, I am ready to suffer persecution for justice' sake, but not surely from the brethren of my new faith. Miss Boleyn, seriously, I am turned fanatic about that man, and am ready to pro-

pagate the doctrines of the new Mahomet by fire and steel—or, which is much the same thing, by tongue and pen.”

“We should have Te Deums in all the churches!” she said. “Why not let the great prophet himself know of his new follower? He will cover up his head and die. The booksellers’ shops will be swept of his works. Now, indeed, the new faith has been confirmed, and will be the faith of the world.”

Still he was good-humoured.

“How tremendously severe, Miss Boleyn,” he said. “A shower of tomahawks and sledge-hammers; let it hail on. I am a mean adversary, totally unworthy of you. Strike once more, and in return let me give you some of those grapes.”

She was utterly mystified by this insensibility—perhaps a little provoked, but took the grapes.

“Now we have smoked the pipe of peace together,” he said.

Then he left that unlucky subject, the dry-bones of the philosopher, and passed by to others, gliding over them gracefully

and delicately, and ornamenting as he touched them. The queen listened with a certain pride and elation. Some mention of a recent *mésalliance*, thrust in edgeways, set the subject which had been fermenting in his mind the whole day a-blaze. The faith which holds by blood—the salvation which is by heraldry—the one doctrine, one grace, one hope, one strength, which all comes of the holy and apostolic, and, it may be added, select church of rank and ancestry, swelled up in him, and fired his tongue. The text of the morning was Mildrington Grange, and his preaching was from the heart. He was the inspired prophet of aristocracy. His words burned, for he believed. He had in him at that moment the strong faith which moves mountains—the faith of pedigree, which for him would be presently translated into firm substantial reality. Suddenly he checked himself in his rhapsody. The skilful barristerial eye saw, or fancied that he saw, something.

“Ah,” he said, “you are getting ready. The poor thoughtless catechumen was for

a moment off his guard. Now strike home. He is unresisting. Come, Miss Boleyn—take sure aim—something sharp and stinging.”

Positively something like the shadow of a colour came into Miss Boleyn.

“You are mistaken,” she said, quickly. “I can appreciate genuine enthusiasm, however misdirected. You are an earnest, well-meaning convert, at all events.”

Mildrington shook his head doubtfully. “There is something severe, intolerably cruel, wrapped up somewhere in that compliment, could I but get to it. O this stupid impenetrability! Do me justice, Miss Boleyn. I give you credit for something terribly crushing and sarcastic, though at this moment I cannot just see it. By-and-by I shall be more acclimatized to your manner and take my punishment with proper intelligence.

“Why do you purposely mistake me?” she said calmly. “It is no compliment to tell me that I always delight in cruelty, and speeches that hurt and give pain.”

“You are in a very odd humour to-

night, Mildrington," said his mother. "I never saw you so before."

"I have been guilty of enthusiasm," he said, "of downright, old-fashioned enthusiasm. For the moment I forgot myself. I did not think who was by. Forgive, Miss Boleyn, and it shall not occur again."

It was plain with all his affectation of weakness and submission, he was, insensibly, to be superior to-night. Perhaps the secret of all this was his utter unconsciousness and carelessness as to the manner of shining.

The queen presently mentions one of those grown-up people's toy books, those tinsel poetry and picture books, which crop up profusely about Christmas for the children of forty and fifty and sixty. The poem of Tennyson had reached her in a gaudy, bon-bon or French plum box of this description, and she spoke of it with pride. On this text, a rich one, Miss Boleyn spoke, not didactic, or by way of repulsive homily, but with an earnest and reverent sentence or two. Mildrington chimed in

responsive in the same key. The old film of ice, which seemed to hold her eternally, began to melt away in a universal thaw. The two reacted upon each other, colour came into her cheeks, fire touched his tongue. He did not fall into the fustian of rhapsody, neither did he put his fingers into the jam-pots and marmalade of language—the sticky cloying treacle of commendation, so meaningless and wholesale. He did not take a “dredger” and sprinkle over his poet the flour of rapturous commendation. This was not *his* fashion. He flew by in a burst of genuine fervour, scattering fire and sparks in passage. Looking suddenly towards Miss Boleyn, he surprised the full round eyes, widening palpably, glistening like two immeasurably deep wells, fixed upon him, and he checked himself as before.

“Again I have forgotten! This rant is out of place here. I am always straying into these beautiful but useless pastures. Two and two is the best poetry in the world—the four arithmetical rules—and the logic of facts. Shall I never learn?”

“Mildrington !” said the queen, frowning.

“Shall you never learn indeed,” said Miss Boleyn, with much warmth and impetuosity, “that you are cruelly, and, I believe, purposely libelling me. Because I cannot conceal my contempt for the swarm of shallow creatures that pass me every day, who, if they did not travel beyond their own shallowness, would be harmless and inoffensive ; because I do this you must set me down as a vile unbeliever, a universal scoffer. Because I loathe shams, you must consider me a blasphemer of all that is good and noble.”

These strange words, spoken with extraordinary earnestness and even tremulousness of voice, utterly mystified Mildrington. He said, very gravely,—

“Heaven forbid, Miss Boleyn ! I say a good many mad things, and you must not take all I say for earnest. I understand you, and I think you have a fair glimmering, not unmixed with distrust, of me. Here are mutual explanations. Let us swear eternal friendship, Miss Boleyn.”

Her lip curled. "I make no explanation," she said, "I have nothing to explain, if mistaken meaning was put upon what I said. A harsh world considers every bit of natural feeling but a qualification for an asylum. A person who speaks freely in a drawing-room is only an escaped lunatic."

"To be put at once into a fashionable strait-waistcoat," said Mildrington, with a smile. "Then I have long been *non compos*."

"And I," said she, "a dangerous mad-woman."

"What strange ideas you two have got up," said Mrs Mildrington, much pleased.

There was a sudden turn in Miss Boleyn's mind. She resented this copartnership.

"Mr Mildrington speaks for himself," she said; "it so happens that on this occasion we chance to agree, but it is pure accident."

"To be sure," he said, rising, and apparently much amused; "let Miss Boleyn have the sole monopoly of the insanity, if



she please. I am not sure that I am ready to sacrifice my sanity for the pleasure of being classed with her!—It is very late, I have kept you up unmercifully.”

He wished them good night.

“I shall come again,” he said, “when I hear that Miss Boleyn is in a lucid interval. Heaven forbid,” he added, laughing genuinely, “that I should wish to disturb your empire—to infringe your patent of delirium.”

Exit Mildrington, relishing this conceit hugely. His mother glides out after him. She presses his hand.

“Excellent!” she whispers; “my own son!—You must come again.”

“Certainly,” says he, “on some other Sunday—soon.”

“No; on Thursday, Charles Boleyn, her father, is to dine with us; you must meet him.”

Mildrington deprecates this feebly, and with indecision.

“Hush! he will be very useful to you! a most important man! mind you, come—I shall expect you.”

And she glides away, back again, into her drawing-room.

He walked home with swift strides, prodigiously elated. "A strange creature, a mysterious creature," he found himself saying to himself, "so utterly tantalizing! A living riddle—I should have to study her for months, and yet at the end be miles away from her real nature. A drawing-room witch, a Lady Lorelei!" He thought with complacency, as he paced along rapidly, of the little skirmish. "She found me a not unworthy enemy," he said; it was pleasant while it lasted—a sensation getting to be new for me. I was growing rusted from want of use." And then it was suggested to him, quite naturally, by the ordinary positive law of association, *how* it was that this rust came upon him.

We can too readily conceive, that the mind, from long lying fallow—at least as regards the domestic pastures—becomes sluggish and unfruitful. "Only tickle Australia with a hoe," said Jerrold, "and she laughs with a plentiful harvest." So with our Mildrington, he had been famously tickled

of this night, and with what satisfactory results has been seen. Alack !—it was plain that this tickling process was not in fashion where he was hurrying now. Each of us has a small trained Mephistopheles, in the livery of the Great Nameless, attached to our persons to whisper these little matters to us ; expressly salaried for the purpose by the competent authority. Besides, a logical mind *must* work. Given two fair premises, it is hard not to draw the irresistible conclusion. And so Mr Mildrington felt that he was leaving sparkling hermitage behind him, and that part of his diet was now to be something like milk and water. The gruel of domestic life was waiting for him.

The little lady had been sitting up anxiously, while the spirited play had been going on at the other house. We know what is in her mind ; what she is counting on. Enters our hero with the flush of complacency on his face ; not the pink and dewy philanthropy with which men come home from banqueting to their ladies. The little lady runs to meet him.

"Well," she says, anxiously; "tell me all about it."

"A most agreeable evening," says her lord, with enthusiasm; "such tilting and skirmishing I have not had for a long time. But we parted friends; all made up."

The little lady sprang up and clapped her hands. "Oh, what good news, I am so happy. Dear Mildrington, we shall be so happy now."

"What *do* you mean, child?" he said, pettishly (he had had a spoonful of the domestic gruel). "Oh!" he adds, with something like humiliation, "I had forgotten." There was a pause. "There was no opportunity—that is"—

There was a world of blank and cruel disappointment in the little lady's face.

"There was some one else there," he said; "it was impossible."

"Who?" said she, quickly. With your wives, third persons are *primâ facie* hostile, and impediments. "Who?" she said again.

"Another lady, that Miss Boleyn—

very clever, and that sort of thing. I wish you had seen us fighting all the night." He would have been glad to have some encouragement to give one of his popular etchings of the scene, he being full of the subject. But the little lady was hanging her head despondingly, with the most piteous look in the world. Again, the private Mephistopheles whispered something to him—jogged his memory, as to the *feu d'artifice* he had left crackling and sparkling behind him. It was impossible not to draw the contrast.

"Well," he said, "what is the matter—are you sick? Have you nothing to say?"

But the little lady hung down her head still more, and said nothing.

"Well," he said, with a peevish sigh; "if this be the case, there is no use in staying up; you will be better in the morning. I must go down and do some work, before going to bed."

We may wonder what it was that was disturbing the little woman's mind, and that kept her awake half that night. These

newly-wedded wives have a sort of connubial second-sight, and on the barest hint will spell out futurity. Could it be that she had a certain presentiment about coming troubles, hazily associated with the strange woman of whom she had heard to-night?

"I am not sick," she said; "but so disappointed. I thought this would have been such a happy night. You know you said you would tell her everything to-night."

"Good gracious!" said Mildrington, "how unreasonable you are. Would you have me tell our private matters out before the public. Haven't I said there was another lady present."

"Ah! that other lady." You see *this* lady was not sparkling or *spirituelle*, or perhaps had grown a little hackneyed.

Mr Mildrington on this gets tired, and says he must descend to his briefs—and so he does.

And thus it was, that the water rushed, and the water swelled. And so that day came to a finish; for it touched close upon

midnight. A day of some significance for the parties.

Yea, the water rushed and the water swelled. As the clock struck there was a Lorelei sitting—not on a rock, with long dripping hair; but in her room, in front of the fire, with arms folded, and steadily regarding the coals. And the fisherman, at that same moment, was down in an incongruous fisherman's hut—a study—making believe to read law papers. Alack! he was out on the ocean at his fishing.

And up-stairs there was a little foreign woman, with her hair all in disorder, flung about her face in a tangle, and little bits of finery on her dress, crying her very little soul out. What children these women are?

## PART IV.

## I.

CHURSTONE BOLEYN, ESQUIRE, M.P.,

CHURSTONE BOLEYN, Esquire, M.P., was come to town from Churstone, the family seat. His name was to be found in the column of elegant arrivals at Star-ridge's. The journal of *pur sang* added, indeed, magnificently, "and suite;" but this retinue resolved itself into the familiar valet, or *garde de corps*.

A pale pink country gentleman, Boleyn of Churstone, M.P. Not raw and staring, and of an agricultural sirloin red, with an over saturation of the fats and the juices, and the richer oils, induced by devotion to the ox, and the labours of the ox; but a ripe softened pink, as though the sun's



rays had fallen there, directed through the mellow medium of decanters of tawny port and '48 claret. Not short and stout, but tall, and inclined to a gentle portliness. A soft mellifluous utterance, which came forth thickened by an implied under-current of fine old timber, sir; demesne land, sir; neighbour, Lord Hartletop; balance at Hoare's, sir; and stake in the county, sir. A clean man, with bright shining linen that reflected the spectator, and an eternal white waistcoat—copious, and yet glorious. These elders, respectful of their persons, deserve the reverence, and in a certain degree, the gratitude of society. Youth, and even a plated youth, it inhales most sweetly, and it turns with a just repugnance from the polite squalor and licensed neglect of advancing old age.

Churstone Boleyn, Esquire, M.P., was up in town at Starridge's. Viscount Hartletop, M.P., and colleague of Churstone Boleyn, Esquire, was also stopping at the same select house of entertainment. We read these little entries in the column of elegance every morning, almost contem-

poraneously with our prayers. The fashionable fumes ascend with a grateful savour, commingled with the aroma of tea and hissing chops. It gives a sense of soft satisfaction to know that noble persons have come and have gone, are staying in town, and have passed away to the country. *Nihil humanum alienum*, and the rest; provided of course the humanity be Dresden or Sèvres. Mrs Mildrington, the Dowager, as she now was, unknown to herself, read these precious notes with a sort of gluttony, in bed, before her prayers; saw that Churstone Boleyn, M.P., was come, and thought how she would ask him to dinner.

A grave matter had brought Churstone Boleyn, M.P., to town. The country, that is, the country strictly, the prairies, where the old timber grew, and the broad fields of yellow corn and produce, raised by ancestral dependents and clansmen—the splendid aggregate which ministered to the glory of pure blood and real nobility, was now fast hurrying to decay. It was notorious. Let that pass. “For the last five-and-twenty years, sir,” said Churstone

Boleyn, Esquire, M.P., in his well-known speech at the dinner of the Bindon Royal Agricultural Show—Viscount Hartletop, M.P., in the chair—"for the last five-and-twenty years I have been, sir, a sad and sorrowful observer of this fatal deterioration in the spirit of the times. I have seen, sir, the links which bound man and man together; the honest, sturdy yeoman, who make up the bone and sinew—yes, the *bone* and *SINEW*"—he repeated, as the happy allusion brought thunders of adhesion—"yes, the bone and *SINEW* of our country's greatness—and his landlord—gradually shattered. I have seen, sir, that spirit of faithful dependence—that submissive trust—which was *once* the characteristic of our *noble* peasantry, gradually impaired. I have seen, sir, the fields—the green fields of merry England, sir—disfigured with smoke and factory chimney. I have seen," added Churstone Boleyn, M.P., with warmth, "upstart vulgarity seating itself in the high places. I have seen, sir,"—

But all that we really did see on this occasion can be found by the curious set

out in a pamphlet entitled "Speech of Churstone Boleyn, Esquire, M.P., delivered at the Dinner of the Great Bindon Royal Agricultural Cattle Show—Viscount Hartletop, M.P., in the chair."

The sly and artfully concealed allusion to "upstart vulgarity in the high places," was considered an exquisite thrust at a certain Huggs, a notorious soapboiler neighbour, who, with the low insolence of his tribe, had purchased land, cheek by jowl with the Boleyn estates, and had actually erected a chimney within easy view of Churstone windows. Soapboiler he was not, strictly; his were properly a sort of chemical works. And the whole cream of the thing was, that this Huggs, the soapboiler (or chemical works man), was sitting at the dinner, only a few seats removed from Churstone Boleyn, M.P., and it was often afterwards mentioned among the squires, with an infinite relish, how "Boleyn, sir, fixed him with his eye, as steadily as I look at you now. And if you had only seen, sir, how the poor soapboiler fellow hung down his head!" For the coun-

try, it will be seen, was one of the good old hunting sort. "We want none of these vile workmen and day labourers among us." It was even whispered that the soap-boiling fellow had been originally foreman of works, or in some such degrading office.

Churstone Boleyn, M.P., and this person were at feud. That is to say, the Member of Parliament was at feud with the plebeian. He required him peremptorily to take down his works, chimneys and all, and to remove, with his pans and implements, to some other parish. The low plebeian actually refused—politely, certainly, but decidedly ; and the noble M.P. cut him—nay, got others to cut him. But the other seemed rather to thrive under this excommunication ; nay, began adding to his works. And presently Churstone Boleyn, M.P., one day luckily discovered a little alkali floating down one of the sacred family waters—a tiny trout brook—and thought of legal steps. The idea filled him with delight. He felt an Indian joy. The very sight of the plebeian and

his chimney was a daily exasperation. He would challenge this handicraftsman to a *duel a la mort* before the lieges of the country; bah! duel, with such fry as that? No, he would make the law his agent and pay it to do his dirty work. As for soiling his fingers personally with a low indigenous proletarian, the idea was simply ludicrous. The man should be put down. The "fellow"—he was usually alluded to by this designation—the "fellow" should be taught his place, and for the purpose of teaching "the fellow" his place was Churstone Boleyn, M.P., now in town, sojourning at Starridge's select establishment.

## II.

## A NEW ALLIANCE.

MR MILDRINGTON, it will be recollected, was to dine with his parent on the next Thursday. True, he was still plunging through the morass of the heavy Patent case; he was sinking and struggling in the thick miry compost, which clung about his limbs, and bid fair to drag him under; but he was for all that making his way across—surely and steadily. Still, he had barely an hour's surplus. It devoured him. And yet he was dining out—taking a broad slice of diversion—on Thursday evening.

“I have neglected my poor mother sadly of late,” said Mr Mildrington to his lady. “You are the innocent cause; *you* have turned me into a monster of filial in-

gratitude—you should blush for such conduct.”

The little lady was much pleased at this complimentary objurgation. Recollect the memory of that uncomfortable scene a few nights back was quite passed away. We are all liable to be foolish sometimes, and are sorry in the morning.

“I must dine with her to-day, poor soul!” he continued. “She has made a point of it. However, I shall get away as soon as I can with decency—that is, if the strange metaphysical woman she keeps with her will let me.”

Something jarred at the heart of the little lady, and her little foot pattered quick upon the carpet; but she had been training herself these last weary days, and saw the folly of the thing. She must not be childish, nor must we set down this Mildrington of ours as a sort of conjugal Tartuffe; for a sham conscience was telling him that he had of late been remiss, brutally unfilial. So he must go. In his cab he took out little select pieces from his armoury, tried their springs and work-



ing, and burnished them up. He looked forward with complacency to a night of some little stir and sparkle—to a night that is of true filial duties renewed, vamped up again. Sweet are the pure domestic charities !

Through the unmelodious jangle which travelled along with him some pleasant little conceits came through his brain. These he laid hold of by their gossamer wings, and put by for a season a little later on. He felt himself in good “order” for a rare evening’s entertainment—for something fresh and intellectual.

His mother was in the drawing-room, and also Churstone Boleyn, M.P., the very cream of the country interest, tall, permeated with starch and general stiffening matter ; and who suggested the idea that if you might take the liberty of bending him forcibly from the middle upwards, he would creak and crackle, and eventually fly in splinters. At the moment that Mildrington was proclaimed by the herald menial, he was being ossified on the rug, and was clearly suffering the horrors of a

polite garroting from his neckerchief. He was glad to know Mr Mildrington—very glad indeed; and inclining towards that gentleman with a polite effort, something appeared to strain and creak interiorly. Someway Mr Mildrington thought he saw an artificial frame-work through his waist-coat, and there was a lack of lubricating fluid about his tongue almost painful to the hearer.

The door opened, and our hero looked towards it for that magnificent entry which he counted on. I am ready for her, he thought, at whatever game she may choose.

It was only Mr Deacon, the ancestral butler, proclaiming dinner, musically. It was clear there was to be no triumphal entry this time. He looked round sourly, and that prodigious burst of filial affection which had taken him there, was of a sudden chilled.

“Mary,” Mrs Mildrington, explained, “had gone out that morning to spend the day with some friends. She would be back at ten o’clock.”

This was more offensive still. She should not have been absent on any pretext whatever; but, when she knew beforehand that his Majesty the King had fixed, as it were, a "command night," it was gross; and it looked curiously like as though she had played this trick of malice prepense; perhaps out of female spite for that little rout of the other night. Never mind; and he took his soup raging hot. He was very wroth. Churstone Boleyn, M.P., took *his* soup with dignity, letting it down stiffly among the iron rods and general apparatus which Nature had furnished to him for its reception. Between the various spoonfuls he considered that the country was, so to speak, gone. The old healthy feeling had died out (spoonful)—that grateful dependence of the poor upon the rich (spoonful)—was—(spoonful)—evaporated. "I have seen—(I shall be so old-fashioned as to ask for a little more of that soup)—I have seen the yeoman—the bone and sinew of the land—(spoonful)—gradually estranged from

his legitimate protector—(some bread, if you please)—I have seen—”

Mildrington had not been at the great agricultural dinner—Viscount Hartletop in the chair,—neither had he seen the shilling pamphlet which contained the famous speech. *We* have heard these sentiments before. So had Mrs Mildrington. So had a fair sprinkling of his acquaintance.

The country being gone utterly, and the connexion between its bone and sinew severed hopelessly, Churstone Boleyn, M.P., grew much more cheerful. He seemed to have got an instrument and loosed the tightened nuts and screw-bolts of his interior economy. By the emollients of good sound Madeira, and dainty *entremets*, which fluttered round the table, and wooed with a gentle importunity, the soul of our hero was pacified. His wounded spirit was lulled; and this mass before him, labelled, Churstone Boleyn, might be fused down into a sort of extract which might prove of use to him, Mildrington.

Whatever he touched he might adorn certainly ; but he, at the same time, had the faculty of turning it to practical gold, of making it serve his purpose immediate, or even contingent, in some shape or other ; and so of this night, though his entertainment was in a manner cruelly frustrated, he put off his fuming and sulking, for a more private hour, and set himself to see what gain could be worked out of the figure here beside him.

Churstone Boleyn, M.P., having duly mourned over the daily increasing gap between the bone and sinew of the country and their natural protectors, cheered himself a little with some Madeira, and then proceeded to bring up from the country the "soapboiling fellow," which was always his legitimate supplement to the abstract theory. In fact, the abstract theory might not have been so diligently ventilated but for the offensive concrete shape which it chose to assume.

The noble M.P. described the wretched man with much power, and took him through all the stages of his unhappy rise—

"I actually believe," said Churstone Boleyn, M.P., with a look as though he were going to be ill, "he was originally running about barelegged, picking up half-pence—a common vagrant, sir; and there he is now"—. His feelings would not let him finish.

Mildrington was an aristocratic plebeian. That is, he had a leaning to the genuine, unmistakable unwashed. He respected the chronicles of self-made men. He would preach to them at Athenæums, and would take a dirty hand with satisfaction. But to your half-caste—your semi-decent, semi-noble fraternity, who would be on a level on any small encouragement—these he kept at a distance, with even insolence. The gulf is so wide between A and Z that there is no danger of fusion or contamination; whereas, in the case of the intermediate letters, it is very different. And so Mildrington did battle bravely for the working classes. Well, scarcely. As far as the bare, naked principle, he might have stepped forward; but we can all see that this soapboiling

case was one of pure vulgar insolence, quite rampant and offensive. So he was consistent ; and being, besides, in an acid vein, from causes mentioned above, he began to switch the unhappy soapboiler with stinging strokes. The etching he gave of the low gutter blood—under the disadvantage, too, of having never seen him—was excellent.

“A gross creature,” he said ; “a human walking hint of a butcher’s shop—a raw and red sirloin, bursting out of a coat—beef in broadcloth—I see him perfectly.”

“Exactly,” said Churstone Boleyn, M.P. ; delightful. ‘Beef in broadcloth’—very good, very good, indeed !” and he chuckled pleasantly, until some of the iron rods inside actually clanked against one another.

“Yes, Mr Boleyn,” Mildrington went on ; “it must be painful to be driven by the crowd against such a creature—to have his bulk resting on you, and his coarse, meaty face flaming into yours. I am always hot when one of these strong

crimson physiognomies turns in my direction."

"You can have no idea what I suffer, my dear sir," said the other gentleman.

"And a loud, healthy voice that chills the heart"—

"Yes, yes."

"A laugh like the snorting of many horses"—

"Exactly! capital! My dear sir, what a sense of realizing a truth you have. I see the man at this moment, and the fellow's chimney actually smoking away in sight of the garret windows."

"Monstrous!" said Mildrington.

"However, I saw Thrupps to-day—Thrupps, my man of business—and Thrupps has the whole case before him. He has my instructions. To-morrow a case shall be laid before counsel, Thrupps says. It is touchy, Thrupps says, dealing with these matters—but it is a clear nuisance, and we shall level the fellow's chimney yet."

Mr Mildrington then told, humorously enough, of a similar case which he had



been "in" very recently, and which squared in a very remarkable manner with the present. The soapboiling element was wanting. The obnoxious material was chloride of lime, or some such chemical works. The proprietor was an odious plebeian also, and the outraged petitioner was an elegant patrician of large estates. He gave an outline of the incidents. Gales, it appeared, occasionally directed themselves full on the aristocratic tenement, charged with horrible mephitic vapours, which would have been tolerable had they been generated at a source which had the seal of good blood and standing marked upon it; but the proprietor was a healthy and familiar plebeian. To Churstone Boleyn, M.P., condescending to enter into the equities of the business, our barrister then broke out upon the law of the case—epitomized in a skilful fashion and in popular language what it was, examined and cross-examined Churstone Boleyn, Esq., M.P., elicited facts, drew conclusions, and finally pronounced that the law was with him.

"You shall level the fellow's chimney yet, depend upon it," said Mildrington. "You shall stifle him with his own suds."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the noble M.P., with a dry, incorporeal laugh. "Beef in broadcloth! I can't but think of that. *So* like him! Very good! Uncommonly good! Really!"

In the drawing-room—both gentlemen balancing frail coffee cups in their fingers—Churstone Boleyn, Esq., is whispering with Mrs Mildrington.

"Is this a busy time with you," she asks of her son, "down at your courts?"

"Well," said Mildrington, smiling, "we slaves of the wig, or of the bag, are always pretty full. The attorney genii allow us no rest."

"Because," said the other, "we are having some friends down at Churstone about the beginning of next month—a sort of shooting party, in fact; and if you could, h'm—give us the pleasure of your society"—

"He must," said the queen, eagerly;

"I accept for him. He is working too hard. He wants air and rest. I accept for him."

Mildrington accepted in that feeble, self-denying fashion, with which it is customary to accept such invitations. It is waived off with an excess of modesty, yet, at the same time, tolerated with a passive acquiescence.

"Yes, you must come," said Churstone Boleyn, M.P., crackling with many alarming noises; "only a few friends. I want you to meet Lord Hartletop, my colleague. Ha! ha! I must tell him. 'Beef in broad-cloth'—really very good—uncommonly good! Ha! ha! Good night; good night. Glad to know you."

So they went their respective ways. We may speculate within ourselves whether our skilful Mildrington—trained man of the world as he is, and diplomatist of society—mapped out this little course of events exactly as it was to turn out. Had he said to himself, when sipping his first glass of Madeira and measuring the quality

of Churstone Boleyn, M.P., "This man shall admire me, and shall ask me to his house?" Perhaps it fell out by pure accident, and natural association of events. We are no more privileged to see behind our hero's dress waistcoat than any other unit of society. It came about in the most natural way in the world, whatever was the secret cause at work.

Churstone Boleyn, M.P., went home to Starridge's select hotel, relaxing some screw or girder interiorly to admit of his being bent into a cab. Mildrington went home, too. He waited until close upon half-past eleven o'clock—no doubt out of pure filial tenderness; for his mother was very anxious that he should stay—and he did stay, but without any seeming profit that she intended. She talked in an imperial manner of the Boleyns, and the state they kept. She sang their glories. On them waited the thrones, dominations, and principalities. And this to a chorus not altogether hostile. Finally, towards midnight, he, too, must go his way—per-

haps a little fretted at having waited, more fretted still at having waited bootlessly. Beautiful, indeed, is this filial duty.

As the prosaic cab drove away with our legal demi-god inside, another drove up ; and our legal demi-god saw its arrival perhaps with impatience.

III.

A CONJUGAL DETECTIVE.

THE little foreign watcher was up. She had a restless, querulous look. Thin, pale, delicate faces do not bear the strain and tightening of anxiety without receiving sure tokens. There were a hundred questions in that anxious physiognomy. This long delay might bode evil or good. Evil, associated with that indistinct shadowy daughter of evil, of whom she had only a dim mysterious consciousness. Good, associated with a splendid reconciliation scene—a crown of fireworks—a blaze of stars—a beneficent forgiveness! Poor child! A conjugal sister Anne up in her domestic tower, looking out for somebody or something to come.

Mildrington came, not without a certain dignity. Perhaps he knew what was

fermenting behind that pale face, and thought how he would make capital of it. He was quiet, passive. A very pleasant night—a sober family night. He had enjoyed himself much. The time had gone very rapidly ; no idea it was so close upon midnight. An impenetrable county member there who afforded him infinite diversion. Quite a study. He quite played with the subject, as the Waltonians do with their fish. He knew he was secure. He dilated on the perfections of the county member. He hardly thought it was ten o'clock. Poor little sister Anne was still inquiring. There was surely some other actor or actress not yet named. He had not enjoyed himself so much he did not know for how long. Finally sister Anne did put her question with hesitation, Who was of the party ? Well there was the county member—a rich study—no one else. How many pounds avoirdupoise are lifted off sister Anne's heart and flung into the open street.

“Where are my mails ?” says King

Mildrington, lolling imperially in his arm-chair. "Any letters to-night?"

"No," says the little lady; "no letters for you."

"Was the post here?" says the king.

Little lady hesitates: "Yes," she says, at last.

"And who did you hear from?" says the king, affably.

"Only a little from mamma," says the little lady, in some perturbation.

"Why," says the king, contracting his brow, "that is the third letter you have had within this fortnight. How they do persecute you with their epistles. What do they write about? Come, little woman, read me out your last. Let me see how mamma of the moustache writes!"

The little lady was yet more perturbed.

"It is up-stairs," she said; "it would not interest you. It is full of the fashions and of bonnets, and of"—

"Why, there it is!" said Mildrington, pouncing with a sudden swoop on a clip of



letters lying on a desk. "Foreign post-mark ! You little traitress ! what do you mean ? How dare you deceive your husband ? "

The king it will be perceived was in a very complacent humour.

But the little lady was sadly troubled. She sprang at the letter and captured it. It was not worth reading out ; it was full of nonsense. He must not ask her ; she begged of him, as a favour. It could not entertain *him*.

"Nonsense," said Mr Mildrington. "What is all this mystery about ? You have no secrets from your husband, I hope ; eh, little woman ! "

Greatly distressed, she kept fast hold of her letter.

"You won't ask me," she said ; "I am sure you won't ! "

"But what have you to conceal ? " said Mildrington. "This looks serious ! Is there any mystery ? "

"No, none in the world ; but I should not wish you to see that letter."

"Oh, certainly. By all means," said

Mildrington, ironically. "Take back your precious document. Upon my word! This grows serious. Is it a nursery conspiracy? What are you plotting? Come," said Mildrington, "come, little lady, don't magnify your little secrets into something serious."

Sorely troubled, she looked at him wistfully.

"Don't, don't ask me," she said again; "it is only the foolish gossip of foolish women. The fiddle faddle about fashions and such things."

"I like the foolish gossip of foolish women," Mildrington said, his hand still extended; "and even their fiddle faddle. Besides, why object to show what is only fiddle faddle?"

"You would be very sorry to see it, yourself," she said. "I know you would. That is—don't ask it, please, don't."

"Certainly not," he said, with mock politeness. "Do not set me down as Bluebeard, or a domestic tyrant! Monstrous idea! You not to read your own private letters. Forbid it, Heaven! Let

us say no more. I like fiddle faddle. I like gossip ; but no matter."

And thus he passed it off. Yet he was not pleased. According to the creed of every true husband, he deemed all his wife's relations private ogres and private ogresses. Because you choose one of the flock, you do not choose the whole. Nay, by that very right of selection there is an implied repudiation of the rest. This was *his* theory, and therefore he did not love this profuse and secret correspondence. Presently he was down in the catacombs handling the bones of Chitty and Coke.

Coming down-stairs a day afterwards, he meets Dolly, the housemaid, with her brushes and dust gear, and among her litter of papers a foreign-looking envelope, with the outlandish postage stamping, meets his eyes ; it is but imperfectly torn across. He impounds it forthwith. "The little minx, with her secrets," he says to himself, pleasantly. "I must ease her of these mysteries. Husband and wife have but one pair of eyes. There, she may rummage my papers, and welcome ; sav-

ing always my journal. There Mildrington speaks with Mildrington; is shriven by Mildrington." Thus, pleasantly, did he perform this bit of larceny. He read it in his study, in his arm-chair. In French, from the mother—her of the moustache. "Ancient cat," was the compliment he addressed to her at starting. He read it through with a growing interest. His face deepened into a frown. He tore it up. "So that is what is going on," he said. "I must, must I? I shall be made to do so, if I delay much longer. And she is to be firm and determined. Insist upon it. Due to her dignity as a wife! What a game! And this treacherous little ——. I will see how she will carry out her instructions. What discoveries we do make to be sure." And he went back into Humpty and Dumpty, or some other "subject," which was laid out before him on his descending.

At breakfast, he said, artfully enough, "It is unlucky, truly, that every time I go to tell about our little business, some one always takes good care to be in the

way. It seems as if it was done on purpose."

"Could you not go to-day, dear?" she said, suspending the flow of fragrant tea. "Take her in the morning, when she is sure to be alone."

"Impossible," said he, carelessly, "my day is quite full. I have not a moment to spare."

"And won't you try, dear; *do* try. It is only one little plunge, and all is over in a minute, like drawing of a tooth; and then how happy we shall be."

"You see," said he, "it is very serious business. There are more difficulties than you are aware of. We must take time. A single false move might ruin us all. I assure you it is a very delicate matter."

The little lady here laid down her teapot, and came round.

"You know I have set my heart on this, and I cannot tell you how uneasy I feel. Put yourself in my place—a stranger—the little alien, you used to call me—so helpless, without friends."

Mildrington was almost smiling, for

he was thinking of some passages in the letter which tallied wonderfully with these sentiments.

"And, besides," added the little lady, drawing herself up, "it is only what is due to me—to my dignity—as—as your wife."

Mildrington broke out into a loud, obstreperous laugh. The little lady stopped short, deeply wounded.

"Don't look so," said he, still laughing boisterously; "your little dignity so amuses me." What really was amusing him was the curiously exact reproduction of the passages of the torn letter. He relished hugely, looking on, as it were, through an imaginary keyhole. The little lady had no suspicion in the world, but was wounded by this open scoffing at her—so she took it to be.

A cleanly-folded bale of legal paper, laid before him towards noon, "for advice and opinion," set him in excellent humour; for it was in a matter where one Boleyn was petitioner, and one Huggs respondent; and it was in reference to

certain soapboiling works down at Churstone that he was to advise. His little exertions, then, of the night before had been put out to decent interest : the returns were very satisfactory. So, with much buoyancy, he flung himself into Boleyn and Huggs ; hunted down precedents ; found cases in point ; in fact, saw his way very clearly. " A good case," he said, with enthusiasm ; " we must win for the Member for Buckram "—for he had graciously re-baptized him with this epithet ; and he wrote a confident and flourishing opinion with the usual technical objections.

And when he got home he found more of his interest paid back to him, for there was the little lady gazing ruefully at a monster card, on which was emblazoned that Mr Churstone Boleyn requested the honour of Mr Mildrington's company at dinner on the Monday following, at Star-ridge's Hotel ; the time, the canonical hour of a quarter to eight.

Mr Mildrington smiled very happily at this trophy. The little woman kept

looking at it stupidly and ruefully as before. These sad receptions and hang-dog airs were beginning to fret and chafe the lord of the house. He wished his woman to sham cheerfulness against his return, even where that tone of mind was wanting. She, poor little soul, was no doubt thinking how she was cut off from sharing in these triumphs; panting to get abroad into wax-light society—as is the very passion of these foreign women.

“Really,” said he, “this is gratifying—very gratifying—very polite and very considerate.” It was not the mere rejoicing at such a thing as the mere bounty of a stray dinner flung to him in this fashion: it was satisfaction at his own proper will being thus carried out. Still the little lady did not join the shouts of the pæan, or crown him rapturously. She kept twirling the card ruefully.

“What!” said he; “still mewling and puling! Come, little child—do not be infantine! What is it afraid of—or shall we send it to its nursery at once?”

“I know it is very childish; but I



don't like your going to this place—to these people—I have a presentiment of some danger.”

“Do you know, Mrs Mildrington,” said he, with a sort of impatient sigh, “I am afraid you will shortly be making me feel for you an awful respect—a distant reverence; and once you take the shape of Mrs Hannah More, for me, then”—

“Then ?” said the little lady, in some trepidation.

“Why, then,” said Mildrington, “of course I shall entertain the profoundest respect for you, but I shall worship from afar off, not daring to approach such a paragon. Seriously, my child, I must admonish you—bringing one chair for you down to the front of the stage, as they do in the wrangling scene in the comedies, and another for myself.”

In theatrical manner Mr Mildrington did actually lay two chairs, and invited the little lady to seat herself, which she did, fluttering strangely.

“My child,” said he, “does it not strike you that you are getting to be a sort

of moist or damped blanket—a very little blanket, it is true, but still moist. You know, in the hydropathic system, they have what is called in their slang, ‘packing.’ Well, you pack me every evening I return home.”

Little lady’s eyes suffused, and beginning to swim—

“Oh!” she said; “I ‘pack’ you! That is”—

Mildrington laughed.

“Don’t take it to heart, my child; but you do, more or less. Your clever little half-French head takes in a hint with surprising quickness. Think of the ‘packing’ now and then. First point of the meditation; second point, ditto. I never *could* endure the hydropathic system in *any* shape. Now, let the little child go to its nursery! I won’t lecture it any more.”

She glided away without a word. Mildrington descended to Humpty v. Dumpty with a yawn.

## IV.

## DINNER AT STARRIDGE'S.

THAT elegant caravanserai was a little flustered on the occasion. Pressure had been upon its elegant cook and other resources ; not from the mere effort of the thing—for with ordinary creatures who came and went, and paid their bills, it had been done repeatedly, and on a more prodigious scale. But here it was the quality of host and guests that put the Starridge economy in a flutter. Starridge had been own body-servant to the late Lord Tate, and was with that disreputable old nobleman through most passages of his life. He had been a sort of useful Leporello in most of those pranks which caused no little talk and scandal at the time. In the last will and testament of the disreputable peer was adequate provision made for this service-

able henchman, who, with his sudden rise to affluence, became decent and respectable, and presently intermarried with a deceased countess's retired lady's maid. Hence "Starridge's." Hence that select, fashionable, calm, tranquil, and frightfully extravagant house of entertainment. The agricultural aristocracy came there; old Lord Cowmeadow always stopped—so did the Sir Charleses, the Sir Johns, the Sir Harrys, of the strong country interest. They came, saw, and paid. Starridge's militia—the militia of waiters—was called out and under arms in the full uniform of the corps. The great state dining-room was to be used. Everything would be in the best taste. On this occasion will Starridge do or die. And yet at how many guineas a head, O Starridge!

Churstone Boleyn, M. P., suffering acutely from the laundry garotte—the strangulation by cravat—so stiff and rigid that he must have had men at his back with the bolts and instruments, tightening him up expressly for this solemnity—was receiving his company on the rug.

They were racy of the country, and had a flavour of hay—that is, of select or aristocratic hay.

Churstone Boleyn, M.P., stood with a complacent pride, and felt his natural starch circulate through his veins with a genial warmth. Already on the rug were Lord Porkchester, Viscount Hartletop, M.P., old Colonel Gumter, and Pontine Marsh, whose daughter married the old Duke of Mumsberry. On the sofa were disposed Mrs Pontine Marsh and Viscountess Hartletop. Here just entering the door together are young Lilliput (son to Sir George?—ah! so I thought), and Jones, of Jonestown—all our own set, you see.

“How d’ye do, Jones—heard ’twere in town; how are ye, Lilliput—Sir George well? Well,” continues Churstone Boleyn, M.P., creaking at Lord Porkchester, “what do you suppose he did then? Having the honour to be in her Majesty commission of the peace, I thought it my duty”—

“MR. MILDINGTON!”

Enters our archangel—brilliant, glittering, well-appointed, walking with dignity. There was no pause of expectance, as is usual, followed by the hurried entrance of a human being, rushing to his host. Neither did he creep in meanly, as though he had lost his way.

“How d’ye do, Mildrington — glad you’re come. Well, my lord, this low soap-boiling fellow”—

Here he broke off for a moment, and whispered the noble persons with whom he was conversing; and Mr Mildrington was introduced with all the heraldic forms which aristocracy requires in its introductions. He became one of my Lord Porkchester’s and one of Viscount Hartletop’s acquaintances, and interchanged the common courtesies of conversation with those noblemen.

Enter now Mrs Mildrington and Miss Boleyn, both proclaimed by the trumpets of loud-tongued heralds in black cloth tabards. The noble dame swam in proudly, and was an emblem of matronly dignity. But for her who followed, rising from the

sea as it were, borne in on the foam and vapour of tulle—this is not for plain prosaic chroniclers to describe. She fell on Mildrington's vision—Mildrington, whom my Lord Porkchester held then by the button, expatiating on Devons and Kerries—as a living Lorelei, descended from her rock, and come out to dine at a fashionable party. He wandered sadly from the noble lord, his Kerries and Devons. So palpable was his distraction and his plain disregard of a question put to him as to the capability of his own soil as a “rearing country,” that the noble lord set him down as a poor sort of fellow, and took little or no notice of him for the rest of the night.

Man's eye does not ordinarily take in the detail of a dress ; nor when hereafter pressed to describe, can he do so without confusion and awkward floundering. Yet Mildrington's—still as art-critic and purely æsthetical—wandered over lace and muslin flowing in Grecian folds—settled on golden ornaments that glistened in her hair—on the richer confectionery of decoration, which the adornment for dinner

parties exacts, and finally rested on the glowing face and the famous eyes. Of excellent service is the gross dross of humanity all round. That bit of iron framework, Churstone Boleyn, M.P., that aristocratic herdsman, Lord Porkchester, and those frothy rinsings of the ball-rooms, Lilliput and Jones, Mildrington welcomed heartily as foils. He was still, you see, no more than an art-critic, looking at pictures æsthetically, perched upon a matrimonial pillar, the very Stylites of wedded life.

Lilliput had met her in the fashionable fray. They had been drifted together in the fortuitous gush of atoms which constitute elegant society. So when she was bestowed upon a sofa, he drew near with that snug air of proprietorship, and strict private confidence, and snigger of infinite relish, which is now the recognized mode of approach. Your men of war and scarlet delight specially in this secret mode of address. But this Adonis, superfine in chaste shirt and tie, and stud and chain-work, and glistening in his black cloth skin, did not profit by his familiarity. His



words were not heard—his chuckle of mutual confidence raised no corresponding smile. He was frozen away out of it ; and Mildrington, from afar off, in his capacity of art-critic and lover of pure beauty in the abstract, saw his discomfiture.

Possibly for him there was a vacancy ; but he did not hurry eagerly to fill it. Perhaps he was indifferent—perhaps he had other reasons of his own—artful ones, too.

• However, here is herald-at-arms breaking it softly to Churstone Boleyn, M.P., that he is served ; and here is the whole flock, duly yoked in the bonds of holy dining wedlock, rustling in superb procession into a contiguous chamber. Some few men, for whom mates were not to be found, are doomed to a hopeless dinner celibacy—the temporary monks of the party, and follow at the rear ingloriously. They are spectacle to the platoon of serving men drawn up at the door, and feel their shame acutely.

V.

DIVES FEASTS.

THE grand banqueting-room at Star-ridge's had been swept and garnished for the festival. There was a buffet of silver and crystal on the sideboard. The table stretched away like a long cathedral window, glistening with the diaper sheen and subdued religious light of pale yellow and ruby hock glasses. A field of fresh, dainty, creamy napery. Boadly Gonne, who says a neat thing now and again, which has a good circulation, said he liked seeing "even tables with their clean shirts on." A *coup d'œil* of frosted silver, pink flowers, cool, icy-looking jugs; its ill-assorted company of glasses, personifying the Seven Ages or seven wines of man; and long lines of grimly-shaped volutes, our napkin-nests or pockets, wherein rolls re-

pose so snugly, like new-laid eggs. I wonder if a Feejee gentleman, who has moved in the best society of his country, were suddenly introduced to this preparation, and were bidden to divine what its purpose was, what answer would the Feejee gentleman give us.

Company glide up the lane between the file of chairs and the table. A little hesitation as to which they will elect, is allowable to the paired. Gently do ministering elves from behind propel the chairs inwardly. An instant's pause for the decent fiction of an unspoken grace, and the war-feast has begun.

That beneficed clergyman, Churstone Boleyn, M.P., had united our Mildrington to Mrs Pontine Marsh, a poor soul—a feeble thing five hundred degrees below his intellectual level—an unsuitable match—a dining *mariage de convenance*. Many live together very unhappily during this wedded life of theirs. Mildrington regarded his alliance with disgust; but by some strange shifting, some freak of that providence whose department is dining, or

possibly by sheer accident, had Mildrington and his bride—his dining bride—drifted up beside the princess of the feast, Miss Boleyn—a sort of morganatic, or literally speaking, left-handed alliance. Ah! for that neglected wife of his on the right—sure to be left, if we are at all accurate in speculation—to pine in sorrow for the rest of dinner. Waiter-witches far down at the end, have got a cauldron among them, and are busy with incantations, working spells with a soup ladle. Waiter-elves in black trip it along deftly, pattering with nimble feet, performing mystic rites over each guest with green and white potions. A tinkle—not a clatter—is heard. Churstone Boleyn, M.P., who must have had extra workmen screwing at his nuts and bolts, finds them all tight and firm, sits up rigid, sipping his soup; or with an oscillating crank, his head turning in a steel socket, glances from side to side at *his* banquet, *his* elves, *his* company. It is a gratifying spectacle, these serfs tripping it — crossing each other — and ministering to his magnifi-

cence. He is pasha of the dinner, and these are his slaves—saving that they wear no turbans. Practically, he has bought them—for the night. They would put their foreheads to the ground before him—these men—in abject prostration ; or lift his sacred foot and lay it on their heads, provided it were duly considered in their wage.

The chatter does not wax so loud at first. Consider this is but the honeymoon, as it were, and our wedded pairs are all in all to each other. *That* species of wedded bliss will surely outlast a course or two. So we are busy drawing cheques of the ordinary description upon each other's minds, honoured in the usual way, taken up with facility, cashed in the shape of observations barometrical—speculations pluviose and ventose—facts within the province of the Registrar-General ;—in short, those universal assets which the veriest pauper among us, in matter of talk, has always lying to his credit. These things afford a decent subsistence during

the first act, while the serfs are busy with their soup and fishes. Cubes of the two fashionable fishes are in process of distribution. Pink flakes, flakes snowy white—yet how firm!—rest before each, according to his choice. Rich and turgid flows the ensanguined stream of lobster-sauce; and now, at each one's ear, a luscious voice, that seems to have passed through a jelly medium, is borne up softly, breaking the news privately, that here is, indeed, Madeira or sherry brown, or sherry of the paler order. That function rests on a gross and distended menial, curiously inflamed about the face, saturated, as it were, with the flavours and juices of ghostly and departed dinners. He is Chief of the Slaves.

It is grievous to see how soon a little nuptial coldness sets in. Wedded barely a few minutes, and yet there is indifference, if not positive distaste. Faithless mates; some have already gone astray in their hearts—they are weary of the yoke. The accounts are overdrawn; there are no

assets left. Some are absolute mendicants, and are already able-bodied paupers in the workhouse of silence.

For a decent interval, Mildrington fulfils all his conjugal duties, and is a tolerably faithful spouse. Mrs Marsh, poor soul, is but an average creature, one of the commoner pipkins of society. So, for a while, he endures her, at least throughout that soup and fish act; professing to listen to her vapid babblings. But there is other music on his left.

The mind—the soul—has its gala nights. There are festival days, when all things are in fit tune and harmony—when scenery, music, lights, feasting, wines, fall in suitably, and are in perfect keeping. For no very rational reason we hold carnival—we are filled with good things. This was such a night to Mildrington. Something whispered that he was there still but in capacity of art critic. Yet, see here are the runnels of mousseux, the fountains of champagne, hissing and bubbling; the syrupy proclamation issues from the sac-

charine throat of the distended aga, or chief of the slaves.

That princess on Mildrington's left has been constant to *her* temporary lord for about the same span, or so. With the passing away of soup and fish, she, too, has become frail.

The general diapason has now swelled to a key something louder; rigid tongues are being set free, and the buzz swells amain. The complacent chuckle, and sensual relish of one's self, heightened by a sense of promiscuous good cheer, is broken in upon by the protruded dish. Into the very centre of smug jocosity and empty remark is thrust the extended mess of pottage, the proffered outlet, according to the Maintenon—according to the Soubise, or to the "Victim"—or the Fly-in-the-wind—*Vol au vent*—if the brain of Starridge's *chef* have been prompted in that direction: or, possibly the delicate game birds; for the turn of these joys has now come round. Let us take then of the goods the gods provide us with. And



here is the chief slave, with all the port wine in his face, whispering, ever so softly, that he has Moselle wine, and Champagne wine, ready. Let us but choose.

Much louder now the noise. Now, nearly all have forsaken their lawful spouses, with a shameless disregard of decency, and are wantonly disporting with the spouses of others.

Churstone Boleyn, M.P., having had a serf to unscrew him a turn or two privately from behind—is actually stooping across the table, and seeing the relations between the honest peasant and his natural protector established on a firmer basis. He is at that moment seeing the day—a long time back now—when blood obtained a proper respect—when upstart fellows, sir—

“Very nice girl—pity she gives herself airs. The young fellows will have nothing to say to her”—

“But impossible to put up flesh upon her. I give you my word, sir, the tons of Thorley’s food we have spent upon that beast”—

"Not fifty people there. Aw 'sure you, you might have walked through at any hour. Came away in disgust, at one."

"Old relations weakened. I have seen the gradual decay of that mutual dependence of the old English yeoman upon"—

"Judge grossly ignorant—prime beast—finest bull in county. I ought to know—but, if the fellow knew his business"—

"I was engaged. Now what *could* I do, you know? And so I threw over Miss"—

"One of the strangest things—really the most marvellous thing. It quite took my breath away. Villiers assured me that moment, he thought of a poor wretch of a coolie who used to clean his hookah in India, and who was afterwards killed by a sunstroke and arrack combined." (It is Mr Lilliput, who is lecturing on modern magic.) "Now Villiers protests the man could not have the remotest notion that he had been in India—and presently he pulls up his sleeve, and there he saw on his arm, in mauve letters, the name of the

coolie ! This is Villiers' story. (Madeira, please.)"

Mildrington and the lady on his left hand are very busy indeed on this night. His face, at the beginning turned to the east, now has veered round altogether, and looks steadily to the west. Hers, originally towards the west, now looks to the east. The brighter sides of the two luminaries are opposite.

The miserable derelict spouses—mean vessels—whose office through life is to take such treatment, sit up foolishly, and look wistfully from side to side. They are outcasts. They have no communion with either right or left. The thing occurs sometimes.

What do our pair talk of so earnestly ? The face of Mildrington, bent over, seems to flash and reflect light, like the surface of the *plateau*. Corresponding light in that other face. Alack ! he has not talked so earnestly, or with such zeal (not even before his Honour, Sir Palmer Woodcock, on motion), for months back. Our pair are above the vile sensuary influences of

meat and drink ;—and yet, somehow, the flowers and machinery of the banquet *are* emollient on the most etherealized natures. That enforced duress—that fettering two prison guests together, in the pleasant galleys of the dining-room, though often a living guest is chained to a *dead* companion—is perilous. Syrens—(so should there have been a slave to whisper in his ear on his triumphant car, instead of the agreeable chimes of *Moselle* and *claret*)—syrens sit in chairs—to the full as dangerous as those other licensed Loreleis, who have their residence far away in the Rhine rocks. Waters rush, and waters swell, and roll tempestuous down—dining-rooms.

## VI.

## DIVES REVELS.

INEVITABLE is death and judgment—yet scarcely more inevitable than the notorious saddle. That saddle is fate. For the dining man, it is as the sword of Damocles, in mutton—not, indeed, suspended over his head, and swinging by a hair, but pointed fatally at his waistcoat. So, with perhaps a less recurrence, the festival poultry, robed, like the just, in white—the accompanying tongue, faithful as Damon to his Pythias. So with the birds of the air and of the cover. Serfs flit by all the while, diligently, and set the stream of wine flowing.

The voice of my Lord Porkchester is borne athwart the apergne—stentorian—

“A humbug, sir. Don’t tell me.”—  
(In the society of one sex he would have

strengthened the epithet, and made him a humbug lost for all eternity.)—"Down at Porkchester we would put him in the stocks. *I'd* expose his conjuring tricks. I'd *rap* him—rap him over the head and ears—ho! ho!"

Miss Boleyn was exactly opposite the bucolic peer. For his gross, almost brutal incredulity, she felt the bitterest contempt.

"My father has mistaken," she said, "and asked one of my Lord Porkchester's prize animals, instead of my Lord himself."

"A noble beast," said Mildrington, smiling. "So pastoral—so admirable—so savage. He must win the challenge cup."

The bucolic peer, whose birthday must have been the anniversary of a cattle show, broke in here with a prodigious low—

"Hey, Miss Boleyn! *you* swear by these fellows. I know that well enough. What's-his-name is one of your pets—must beg pardon for taking away his character. Am told he is one of the bran new prophets."

My lord, though noble by birth, was by nature but a hind for her. He was not worth scorn or contempt. She laughed.

"Can I blame invincible ignorance?" she said. "If I was to preach to your lordship of cows and swine, and fearfully fat animals, I should be talking of things I know nothing about."

"Or," said Mildrington, "if you were so ill-natured as to laugh at Lord Porkchester himself as 'a bran new prophet,' in the matter of Alderneys or Highlands, or that famous boar"—

"You must respect my spiritual faith," she said, "and I will venerate your religion of the flesh."

Lord Porkchester gave a prolonged low of delight.

"Religion of the flesh! very good," he cried.

"Nebuchadnezzar approves," whispered Mildrington. "You may be happy now."

The large eyes turned upon him.

"Why Nebuchadnezzar?" she said.

"That king grazed with the beasts of

the field," he said, smiling, "and found pleasure therein."

This theme of spiritualism thus launched, was greedily accepted, and waxed from side to side with much liveliness; for the gospel by percussion has many ardent followers and amateur catechumens. As with every new creed, so with the gospel of percussion. It was met with the ridicule of fatuity and sheer ignorance; also with the ridicule of knowledge; also with grave argument—which did not reach the point—and with a blind and insane enthusiasm.

We should have been there to hear that strange lady, Miss Boleyn, preaching rapturously—dilating fervently on this suitable theme. We should have looked on, wondering with the rest; some of us, no doubt, muttering, *bas bleu, femme forte*, and other extracts from man's vocabulary of jealousy. And yet there was none of the didactic austerity of skilled or learned women—no professorial manner—nothing of the she pedagogue; but a genuine ardour—a noble enthusiasm. I do not believe in the hocus-pocus of tables and the



foolery of divination by postman's knocks. She did not so much embrace these tenets as protest against empty stupid scoffers—pure Pagans of the nineteenth century, who, were the Christian faith to be preached again as a new gospel, would jeer complacently, and say, “My dear sir, it *can't* be!” She ravished them all that night. Bovine Porkchester, among the rest, protested he would go and see the fellow next day. Mildrington, too, among the rest. It is no use being tender or mealy-mouthed on this point, for clear-sighted readers have long since seen whither this unfortunate gentleman is tending. Even the idle fiction of an art critic was cast away. This mummery of art criticism is no more than playing with fire. At this symposium of Churstone Boleyn, M.P., all the guests seemed crowned with flowers; a flood of pink light filled the room. This lady seemed to have a special nimbus round her head. It had been better for our hero that he had not been at this fatal banquet, and that he had regretted he could not have the honour of accepting Mr

Churstone Boleyn's kind invitation to dinner for —— evening. Though perhaps no particular occasion is responsible for any crisis, which, if it comes not now, will come later, if it *is* to come. It was a pity, at least, that on this day so tender and plastic a humour had seized on this sad Lorelei. By a cruel chance it was her whim to be inviting and to be gentle.

Now the shapes of tottering gold jellies, of Magenta-coloured creams, the well-iced puddings, very soothing and grateful, have been swept away. The land is flowing with claret—it flows from the wide-lipped jugs. Fingers play absently with the dried fruits and French crystallizations. Man is brimming with philanthropy towards his fellow-man (and woman)—feels a gentle glow under his waistcoat—a grateful sense of repletion. He gazes on his thin cup-shaped glass with swimming eyes and a moist tenderness, as the decent menial fills it from behind with a gush. After all life is not so bad. There is a good deal of worth in the world.

## VII.

## THE PITCHER AT THE WELL.

THERE ! there is a flutter and rustle of female garments, a gliding backwards of seats, a brusque staggering to feet from some, a general wreck of napkins, and the houris have passed away from Paradise in a file. They gone, the abandoned Mahomedans draw closer, and become happy in their own gross way, which the law of society enjoins. We send round the bottles briskly, and talk loudly. By a strange reaction, my Lord Porkchester has become moody and melancholy. His heart is far away, thinking, it may be, of his prime pieces, and his tender heifers, and his superb prize sow. Somehow the main debating of his table converges to Mr Mildrington. His words appeared to drop wisdom—to the guests at least. Viscount

Hartletop was observed listening with a profound deference, Pontine Marsh with an equally profound repugnance, both excellent symptoms of sound respect. Churstone Boleyn, M.P., regarded him with admiration. It was now politics—it was now the musical glasses. Mr Mildrington was very pleasant on the extensive range of subjects which lay between both. There was that coming election at Dipchester, so soon as next month, where young Misseltoe (the Honourable Charles Misseltoe), son of the noble Viscount, was about to stand on the family interest. For actually some commercial person—some one in trade—a tallow-chandler, or bookseller, or yarn-spinner, or some such thing, was about to stand in opposition. This was not the time exactly to express his views of the frightful pass the country was come to. However, they would be hard put to to make their battle. The noble Viscount candidly owned that.

“Mr Mildrington is coming to Churstone just at that time,” said Churstone Boleyn, M. P. “We shall go over and

help you. Mr Mildrington shall speak for you."

"I accept the delightful task," said he. "We shall destroy the commercial Amalekite between us. I shall dance upon his body, as they do in the Rolls Court. A pocket borough you said, I think?"

"Well," said Vicount Hartletop, amending the indecorous phrase, "it has always been in our family."

"Monstrous!" said Mildrington; "and this fellow has dared to intrude—or rather the electors have dared to intrude him upon you? It is appalling"—

"It is dreadful," said the noble Viscount, innocently. "It is a public cause however, and all who are not with us are against us. I am glad you are coming down. Hope to have the pleasure of seeing you at Hartletop also."

They joined the ladies—that is, they went up-stairs from their elegant troughs, having had their meal, to recreate the houris, no doubt long desponding through their absence. Noble gentlemen, newly

come up from dinner, wear a dewy, moist aspect, and are apt to lie out in a limp, good-humoured fashion upon ottomans. Let there be no misunderstanding. Here is no allusion to Noah's little failing. These things are not within the decencies of society.

Mildrington was not of this demoralized company. He was contemplating (in his art critic's gown) one of Mr Gibson's exquisite coloured statues. Possibly, a month back, he might have checked himself in this devotion. Someway, of this festival night, there was no such sense of self-restraint. He did not enter brimming with a winey benevolence, as did many of his brethren. He was calm, cool, and with a pulse beating rationally, and yet made straight for where the Canaanitish woman was seated. The pitcher goes tolerably often to the well with a fair chance of security. Nay, our Mildrington had, over and over again, passed to and from the well, with a certain foolhardiness and defiance, but undamaged. But to-night he

has struck against the parapet, and been chipped and cracked. He does not know his misfortune as yet.

Viscount Hartletop, M.P., has a box at the opera to-night, and will take the whole party on if they are willing. Some have other engagements; and my Lord Porkchester notably hangs back, who would far prefer the orchestra of the farm-yard. For him there were bovine basso profundos, ox voices of a surpassing *timbre*, worth dozens of the human order. Dorking poultry, and their sweet diapason, were to him Sontag and Titijens. So he did not go.

About half a dozen of the party repaired to the box of Viscount Hartletop, and it was noticed that Mr Mildrington afforded to Miss Boleyn all that aid which is found so necessary in ascending or descending the stairs of public places of amusement. In that curtained recess, to which mounted from below the soft harmonies of the divine orchestral army, this pair sat, retired, and paid no attention in the world. Unmusical Mrs Mildrington,

triumphant, glorious, and with joy at her heart, watched from afar, yet without watching; devouring the observation of Pontine Marsh, with a relish and graciousness that must have confounded that gentleman. With him such appreciation of his powers was comparatively rare. Something was whispering to her glad heart that the last rivet of proposal was being then driven home. I verily believe that proud and magnificent lady would have been glad to sink down and die happy. For what she had lived for was about being accomplished.



## PART V.

---

I.

“PARIGI O CARA !”

MR MILDBRINGTON—taken to the opera with the fashionable party—did not very much concern himself what the opera was. Like many other persons of taste, he found it a useful medium or basis for conversation. Many go to perform duets and trios of their own (personal *Arias* are most in favour), and consider M. Costa and his orchestra, and the legion of singing men and women, as so much accompaniment for *their* opera.

So our hero took no note whatever of the stage opera (it might have been the old *Rinaldo* revived), he is so busy with his own special performance.

What strains were those floating upwards, somewhat of a sickly diapason, yet very ravishing; something, too, bearing with them a reminiscence even to ears unmusical, or at least inattentive—the very quintessence of a dying fall—most mournful, most musical, and most melancholy—an orchestral wail charged with a world of touching sorrows. Mr Mildrington, though not a trained musician, breaks off a moment from his private communications, somewhat disturbed and mystified; and for the first time looks over the edge of the box towards the stage.

Now he recollects the injured lady of the Half World, her musical and consumptive sorrows. Now he recalls that night with which this chronicle opened. It comes back upon him with a sudden shock, perhaps not unmixed with a tinge of shame and surprise. He almost reckons on finding that this was the very box in which he had sat, at the feet of other company. But that would be too strong a coincidence even for fable. And yet it is not so far away—barely half a dozen or so

off on the same tier. So does M. de Chateau Renaud, the villain *en titre* of that ghostly Corsican Brother piece, gasp with astonishment when he finds he must fight his second duel on that lonely spot in the French wood, where he had slain his enemy but a few days before.

Mr Mildrington grows a little silent as he thinks of these things, and looks over the edge away at that other operatic pew yonder. The same rhapsodies—the same exaltation—and this but a few months back. Though, perhaps, it is assuming too much that these *were* rhapsodies and exaltation. Things are not yet come to this pass. We must be charitable; and surely a man, wedded or single, may wait on a Syren, Lorelei, or Satanella, to an opera, without raising the dust of scandal. Who shall read these secrets? How many defaulting husbands are there—Smiths, Joneses, and the rest—excellent, reputable men, who, when appraised and balanced, shall be found sinners without any overt act?

And so here was this Traviata anthem

ringing in his ears ; and here again was that self-same half-world lady, now near that witching end of hers, which she had played over and over again with a steadiness and constancy that might have shamed those who should be constant upon solemn oath. I wonder what Mr Mildrington was dreaming of, and what this syren thought he was mooning over ! I wonder too what game she was busy playing all this night ; or why it was that she then began to tune her harp, and play most ravishingly—playing her very best. And so that half regretful mood was witched away—and the stage sinner died in her doctor's arms, as she had died on that other occasion—and the distinguished party went away to their homes.

## II.

## STORM IN A SEVRES TEACUP.

AT home it was the old story. After all the lights and flowers and dazzling flare of romance—a change to a cabin and a sort of moral dinginess. Mildrington, we must recollect, had been dining in a hazy, indistinct direction, say with a male friend—Inns of Court—club—anything. We understand these legends, more or less. He did not care to particularize the place or the persons very exactly.

He was come home to his cabin—to Castle Humdrum *now*—(ah! that edifice must have been built very lately!) The little lady has been keeping vigil—a watch-woman of the night. She is leaning on that small hand, which is very thin and small of late, carrying out the poor sham of reading a book. She has a worn, dead

look, which, no doubt, comes of sitting up in this foolish way of nights; and really she seemed to Mr Mildrington, as he entered, to be growing, in fact, rather plain.

"Had you a pleasant party?" she asked, a little suddenly.

"Yes, yes," said Mildrington, "so so—very pleasant. But why do you sit up in this way? There is no necessity for it. You will really injure your precious health!" he added, gaily.

"How did you like the opera?" she said, abruptly, through those little teeth of hers.

"The opera?" said he, with something like faltering.

"THE TRAVIATA!" she said; "not the *last time*, but to-night. How did you like it, you and your friends? I SAW YOU!"

"You were there!" said Mildrington slowly, and looking at her steadily.

"I was there," repeated the little lady, with a curious firmness unusual with her, and looking at him as steadily, "from the beginning to the end!"

“ I am to understand, then, that you followed me to the operá, to spy upon me,” said he, with a sort of polite manner, very favourite with him when preparing to be severe; “ that you have committed the impropriety of leaving your house alone, for the pleasing duty of following your husband and playing the unpaid detective on his actions. Do you mean to tell me that this has been the new amusement you have chosen ? ”

The little lady, growing very scarlet, and with quivering lips, answered still very firmly—

“ Yes ! ”

“ Then,” said Mr Mildrington, “ there is nothing like a clear understanding for persons situated as we are, towards each other. This frankness on your part is charming, and smooths away many difficulties. Another question, which I hope you will answer with the same engaging candour. It will much simplify our future relations. Do you intend devoting yourself to these duties of espionage ? ”

This terrible politeness Mr Mildrington

always considered the most deadly missile in his arsenal ; where it exploded it filled the place with sighs and tears, and clouds of repentance. He was a little puzzled that on this occasion it did not produce exactly its accustomed effect. He suddenly changed his procedure.

"Come," he said, "we must have no more of these childish tricks. You are only making yourself and me ridiculous. It is high time to leave off being a baby. We must send you to school, my good little lady, and have you taught some sense."

"It is time," said the little lady, with a sudden burst, quite startling, "to leave off these childish, these wicked tricks. *I* saw you all this night. *I* was looking at you. I saw every motion, every gesture, and you do not blush—you *dare*—to come here and lecture me, and tell me I am childish and foolish, and have not *your* wisdom—your guilty wisdom."

She pointed this unusual burst with a fierce foreign stamp of her little foot ; her small face glowed ; her lips kept trem-



bling ; her small hands were drawn back, with fingers contracted ; and she looked a perfect miniature tragedy queen. Mr Mildrington was a little thrown into confusion by this sudden attack.

“ Oh, indeed,” he said, “ this is quite a new view of things. We are presenting ourselves in the melodramatic business. The *Grande Tragedienne* ! For one night only ; ha ! ha ! Please let us have done with this, for I am tired of stage business. You had better drop your curtain and go to bed ;” and he began to walk to the door.

Again the little lady heaved and quivered. This time it ended with a burst of spasmodic sobs and rush of tears.

“ *You* think,” she went on, in this sort of gasping, hysterical way—the most effective of all the small arms which Nature has furnished to defenceless women—“ *you* think, because you have a great superior mind, and because I am a poor stranger in this country, without a single friend to help me, you can insult and *degrade* me—yes, *degrade* me—as you please. Another

woman," the little lady added, growing bolder and more hysterical every instant, "you *dare* not treat in this way."

Mildrington had stopped in his passage to the door.

"You are taking leave of your senses," he said. "Be decent at least. Don't admit the servants into your wrongs."

"Why do you keep me in this shameful hole and corner way? But do I complain of it? Would I have complained of it? No! I would have lived in a cellar to please you, for years to come, if I thought it would have served you. But now I see the base game you have been playing all along! I see what you have been scheming; but take care — take care," she added, with another little stamp, "I am not so friendless as you think. O dear, dear me," she went on, in a perfect tumult of sobs, and casting herself down upon the sofa, "I am very, very wretched."

Who could have dreamed of this little volcano? Not Mr Mildrington, truly, on whom this side of domestic life burst with

disagreeable surprise. He, the grand Mildrington of outside life, to be exposed to these vulgar jars. He felt himself lowered exceedingly, into the very squalor of daily life.

He bit his lip, and with that distressing music pouring full from the sofa, left the room, and sent up the maid.

There was not much space for real work that night; but still with measure of his disgust he took to it cheerfully.

III.

TEARS.

AND were honey and treacle moons all finally passed away? Perhaps a little too suddenly for a childish and romantic little heart. A grand nature, like that of our hero, should have had allowance. If so noble and strong, it should have been merciful. But he had brought all *that* foolery to a close by one good stroke of common sense, just as he would have put his spoon into a barley sugar temple at a supper, and levelled the saccharine temple in one sticky crash. Mr. Mildrington, in fact, felt, very properly, that here was a very serious transgression. He owed to himself and his conjugal position — nay, to this giddy young person's *own* position — to visit the offence with very great severity. When a young married lady goes out sur-

reptitiously to play spy upon her husband (however, that part of it is not so bad—he is well accustomed to misconstructions—but fortunately his conduct can bear the most jealous scrutiny), or to go to a public place of amusement at night, and attended only by a duenna, it becomes very serious indeed. It is high time to interpose. At all events let us not forget the decencies due to society, whatever unhappy little misconceptions may prevail; and let us always *laver notre linge sale en famille*. There, please no tears or scene: oblige us.

You see, Mildrington was a barrister, and a very intelligent person besides. The little lady was no more than a poor, weak, coaxing, excitable—and very jealous as excitable persons are—little soul. She was a hundred degrees below the noble hero—the transcendant mind—beside her. Clearly then she was wrong: he had proved it. Why, to think a man of accomplishments and great social powers was not to go out to dinners and operas, and make himself agreeable in return for his entertainment, without a little foolish,

light-brained Fenella of a thing beginning to whimper; why, really it was almost laughably absurd. There, now, let her be a good child; let her struggle with herself and train her mind to bear these sort of things.

This was the sort of disagreeable speculation fermenting in Mr Mildrington's mind, as he worked, or tried to work, in his retired cell that night. Then unpleasant images kept rising before him, even leaping like fairies out of the sacred pages of the Leading Cases in Equity which he was consulting. *Sic vita*—at least so may be the life of the wedded.

But in an hour's time the general utility woman, who in her day played many parts, descended to him with importance, and said, "Please, sir, I think misses is taken bad, and I think, sir, you had better go and speak to her: she does cry so."

Again Mildrington bit his lip, and tossed over his brief. "What a spoiled child! Now I shall have to fatigue myself going through all the stages of soothing

and consolation. Well, well. These are pleasant duties."

He was led up-stairs, and found the little lady tossing on her bed, still sobbing noisily, and complaining piteously, with her face glued to her pillow. Biting his lip, Mr Mildrington drew near, and with a hypocritical cadence began his soothing treatment.

"Now don't. There's a good child. Now don't. I am very sorry—I didn't mean it. Now don't," &c.; and the rest of the authorized expostulation. To which the only reply was the old unintelligible language of sobs, and all the shapes of hysteria, growing more and more violent every instant. Mr Mildrington tried again with the old formula: "Don't, don't, now. There—that's a good child," &c.; but with no effect in the world. Were she a million times wrong, this sort of negative demeanour gives a woman a prodigious power. It is the offensiveness of no offence. The domestic Niobe is armour-plated, and never fails. Mr Mildrington might have sung his soothing recitative, "Don't, now

don't. There's a good child!" for hours without any sensible effect.

But in the morning there were strained, bleared eyes, and two pink spots on the little cheeks. The confidential utility woman was of opinion that something was astray with missis, and that it would be as well to see to it in time. Mildrington saw also that another opinion of the utility woman's was that he was neither more nor less than a brute. A little girlish wife, insipid possibly, but brought to flushed cheeks, and a racing pulse, and a hot dry skin, and a state of silent resignation, *can* have been so reduced but by the agency of a brute. It is the time-honoured conjugal appellation, and has quite a different force when applied to common creatures unwedded.

Mildrington then felt that he was—a brute; but sent for Doctor Smith, who came, and was introduced, and made his diagnosis with all the solemnities of his profession. Then, having made up his mind, he announced that we were upon the threshold of a serious fever, that we



must have caught cold, that we must be kept perfectly quiet—perfect-ly quiet, my dear sir—that we must take soothing drugs, which we shall send by and by; that he will look in again in the evening to see how we are getting on; in short, that we must be very—ve-ry careful, my dear sir.

All this while the prim utility woman is looking on and listening, and Mildrington feels more and more that brute is written on his forehead in conspicuous characters!

But towards evening the little lady began indeed seriously to toss and eddy in the hot waves of something that reached to fever. Official waiting-woman began to patter express from above to below—from below to above—with the importance which personal attendance on a sick bed gives. The professional leech came back, as he had said, and pronounced that everything was proceeding most satisfactorily, as he had foretold it, towards a desirable fever; and in a desirable fever, quite pronounced and satisfactory, the invalid was shortly tossing.

IV.

THE HERO "A MONK WOULD BE."

OUR Mildrington was not the cold-blooded ascetic that he has most likely been already written down by some. He was not without his human failings and little patches of corruption, but there were some sound pieces too. And so he began with being uncomfortable and troubled, then passed on to being much grieved, and finally, after many pilgrimages up and down, when the shadows were beginning to fall, had almost arrived at the conclusion that this was his work, that he was accountable, and that he had indeed some likeness to a monster, and even to a brute. This conviction broke on him specially when he returned from his day's labour before his Honour and their Lordships, and was welcomed with a mournful and most

dispiriting face on the part of the official attendant—in the eyes of that person he felt justly that he was a guilty wretch.

“ Much worse, sir,” said the official lady. “ Oh, mu-uch worse, I’m afraid, sir—not to be disturbed, sir.”

And when he was led in surreptitiously to look on his handiwork, as it were, and saw the little lady lying there, with sharp sparkling eyes, and clearly in the clutches of that fell distemper, he did indeed feel a pang, and a quick sharp stroke of self-reproach. She was a little inclined to wander, and scarcely knew him ; and so he descended again to his chamber, sore and aching at his heart, and a penitent without sackcloth.

Any dramatic element always worked powerfully on the feelings of Mildrington, and here there were dramatic elements present. After all, here was a poor little soul, a stranger in the land, from her own peculiar nature more helpless than other women—an impulsive foreign child that worshipped all the days on her knees at his shrine—(and at this thought the coun-

tenance of Mr Mildrington mantled with a gratified complacency), who depended for her whole life and soul on him, and whom he—well—.

Poor little soul! That the image of the miniature foreign woman adrift in a strange country, and clinging for protection to a grand strong mind like his—that picture pleased him, and he dwelt on it long. Who was she to look to—her own people foreign too, and afar off in a distant country. Little flower,—there was something of poetry in the notion, and he in truth *had* been—he must confess it—a little neglectful, ever so little inattentive. But what could he do? The poor child, how could she, with her foreign training, be equal to comprehending the peculiar—the *very* peculiar exigencies of his situation, the really embarrassing situation in which a person of his talents and genius was placed. Many and many a man, said Mr Mildrington to himself, with a profound philosophy, in his situation, and exposed to the seductions which *his* peculiar gifts only too readily laid him open to,

many and many a man—and mysteriously shaking his head, he ended this speculation with a sense that on the whole he had been wonderful considering—an ascetic in short, and legal Simon Stylites.

That night the little lady got visibly worse; and beginning to be seriously alarmed, Mr Mildrington did duty as watcher. During those vigils he thought very affectionately of her. The crisis and the flurry put all other thoughts away from his mind; and really at times, through its weary watches, when the glare of the Royal Italian Opera recurred to him, and the general phantasmagoria of that exciting night, it came back upon him with a disagreeable association, through that law, we may suppose, which makes us doubly loathe to look back to a happy scene, which was the cause and forerunner of misfortune or distress.

“No,” said Mr Mildrington, with a magnificent burst; “I shall shake off this degrading slavery; it is unworthy of me; it is unbecoming and indecorous even. I shall prove to myself how easily I can

break these vile earthly chains. And yet many and many a man, &c."

And with a lofty manner, Mr MILDINGTON declaimed some Horatian lines touching the subjection of the body—

"Quod nisi serviet imperat."

And of course from that hour forth became a new man, and clean of heart. Like hundreds of other penitent men, who every day become new men, and clean of heart. So with that he went out to meet the great Sangrado of the district, brought in specially, namely, Dr Chunkington, F.R.C.S.

## V.

## HARMONY.

BUT the little lady was, happily, not to die.

Chunkington had said so. The little patient herself had said so, which was perhaps more of a security ; for she had seen, even through her fever mists, the penitent's anxious face bent over into hers, and had some cognizance of his watchings. Strength came back speedily after this. Chunkington was reputed to have done wonders. He came and absorbed guineas as a sponge does water. "Coming on," he would say, smiling, and chinking the guinea reflectively in his pocket over other guineas ; "we must get you well—in time, in time though—we might put you on your legs—say by to-morrow week—could indeed. But we would go back. No, no !

No hurry. Put you on your legs in good time—all in good time;" and gazing on his patient with a pleased smile, he again chinked the newly acquired guinea on its fellows, in a sort of rhythm to his words, "All in good time" (chink)—"All in good time."

When the little lady was convalescent, and was put in the convalescent *pose de rigueur*, we may conceive what delightful explanations and confessions took place. "My fault altogether." "No, no; I too exacting. I should have known—a person so sought after as you, so"—&c., &c. "No, no"—and so the conjugal duet, unto the end, in the full harmony of self-accusation, the poor child was, I believe, secretly gloating over this sickness of hers, as instrumental to such happiness.

But, alack! how imperfect and insufficient are all human works and agencies. In the application of the mechanical powers, what we gain in force we lose in space and time. You see the misfortune was, our Mildrington (whosoever fault it was) was not exactly shaped for a domestic man.



The world was always more or less insipid, where social fireworks were not let off to blaze before him occasionally. The excellent moral round of household duty palled a little on him. And so our little mistress of the mansion, having been sick and convalescent for a good three weeks, Mr Mildrington began to get well again himself, and to leave off being a monk. A most exemplary husband on the whole, but that newly awakened tenderness began to flicker a little in a sort of descending ratio. You see just as the twig is bent the tree is inclined; and after thirty it is pretty well established that no known mechanism can give a permanent bend. It flies back. So, on the whole, it is not surprising if the bloom gradually and imperceptibly was evaporated off the rye.

VI.

BLOOM OFF THE RYE.

It would be interesting to know at what particular date the bloom begins to wear off the nuptial rye. There should be a special column, with tabulated returns, to be left with each married householder, and filled in conscientiously. It would be worth knowing when the scales were first cruelly plucked from the eyes, and the discovery was made that it was poor earthly human nature that we had wedded, and not a divine emanation. Three months—four possibly—one month—one week ; so long may the agreeable lunacy endure. For some months had our Mildrington enjoyed his amiable insanity—then got well suddenly.

Alas, for that rubbing the gilding off the gingerbread ; the saddest, dolefullest,

and most surely to be counted on of all human surprises ! That would be but a stale sermon and a flat preacher which should think of enlarging on such a text. It is so trite, so very stale, that gilding obliteration goes forward every day. Parents find it rubbed away from that human gingerbread called children, friends from friends, worshippers from their heroes, lovers from lovers, and, surest of all, wives from their husbands. And so this grand hero, so superior to those mean weaknesses, those poor promptings which twitch the common fallible canaille to this side and to that—so this famous hero breaks down here like a common earthy man, and as palled and cloyed by a wife, as a child gets tired of its toy. Did he expect her always to prove an angel of his pantomime, all gold and glory and radiant flesh, as it appears to eyes not six years old ?

Alas ! no. It was expressly stated in the beginning that this hero of ours was made of but the poor every-day stuff we see about, leavened however with a large stock of complacency, which looks

well to the eye, and has a sort of perfect flavour. He was indeed a trifle more regulated than his fellows; but when the charge of opposing forces came, and the brunt of spears from opposing quarters, he went down at once. Consider only the bait, the irresistible bait, and which of us could stand steady? And then, too, in that marriage business, his boasted penetration had broken down; for she was indeed a pretty toy, and no more. When we have fetched all the diversion it is capable to furnish out of our toy, child or man, what is left? The Palais Royal windows are crammed with showy tinsel things called "*articles de Paris*"—fresh, gorgeous, dainty for a month, then turning dark and dingy. It is to be feared Mildrington had married an *article de Paris*.

## VII.

## GALA AT CHURSTONE.

THERE was high festival at Churstone. Various local journals (in the country interest) "understood" that Churstone Boleyn, M.P., had been entertaining a select and distinguished party during the past week, and some went so far as to add that their reception and treatment had been "sumptuous" generally. The local journals were also enabled to give their readers a tolerably exact list of "the distinguished circle," and "understood" that "among those who had been honoured with invitations," were Colonel Plato, M.P.; Hon. Henry Truefitt; Viscount Codlins; Viscount Hartletop, M.P., and the Hon. Miss Silverstones; Hon. and Rev. G. C. Horns; Lady Mary, and the Miss Jenkinwaters; Sir Charles and Lady Penguin; Mr Dip-

with ; Captain Munro ; and the Visconte de St Peray Mousseux.

Local minnows, who looked on from a distance, and had a racy appetite for savoury, fashionable details, descended, it must be said, to mean arts and devices to obtain authentic information. They welcomed it third-hand even ; from Mr Jones, for instance, who had it from Mrs Pipples, who was on terms of easy familiarity with the housekeeper at the great house. Such a one's groom was admitted to an affable intimacy with the chief gardener of the famous establishment ; and through this channel various important particulars leaked out, slightly coloured by the peculiar idiosyncracies of the respective vehicles, but still accurate in the main, and above all copious. It was a great season for the country altogether. Churstone races, too, were at hand. Every one was glad, saving always the upstart soap-boiler, who, though making believe to be jocund and cheerful outside, was supposed to be eating his heart out for rage, spite, and vexation.

On authority, then, more or less indistinctly associated with the stable, the garden, or housekeeper's room, it was revealed that the preparations had indeed been on a scale of surpassing splendour. From London had "a chief" been brought down; a kitchen god in a snowy linen crown, with a half-dozen stout and healthy fairies, busy aiding him in the manufacture of his thunderbolts—the snowiest, purest of human beings, in fact apparently made of clear-starched white linen. The old family plate was out, and whispered to be in daily use. The private omnibus of the family—a select stage—was seen passing to and fro between the mansion and the mansion's railway, with company inside, and the London ladies' and gentlemen's heavy baggage outside. In fact, all the country round knew there was festival going on up at Churstone; and all the country round took pride in the unaccustomed gala.

## VIII.

### CHURSTONE PRAYS.

A MORE brilliant sight could not be well imagined than that of the first Sunday, when the distinguished party was taken down to the little village church to say its distinguished prayers. For though they are of a different order of clay—or cream rather—and not in a manner under direct obligations to go through these forms (we are all frail creatures of course, and are perhaps on the whole as liable to sin as lower creatures), still, even in the thick of the gala, it was felt that the opportunity should not be lost, and that some distinguished example should be given to the boors. So the great omnibus came, and the brougham, and the open carriage, and the break for the serious servants (or such as could be spared), and they trundled



up to the old gray church—a splendid procession—with the noble company overflowing literally over the omnibus and other vehicles. But what was it to the procession up the aisle, the rustling and brushing of the London ladies' skirts, and the huddling together of the distinguished party in pure obstruction, owing to a lack of accommodation. It was plain they could not all be got into the selecter pews, specially reserved for them. So after the little simpering and confusion, and shifting—not unattended, too, with sly smiles—in which there was no indecorum, considering it was a distinguished party, the difficulty was got over, by giving up the selecter pews to the ladies, while the gentlemen were taken in here and there; two in this, one in that—on billet, as it were—by obliging parishioners. Such were only too proud of their distinguished company, and rehearsed in their family circle little incidents connected with the occupation of the pew.

Whatever disturbance or inconvenience was caused by the distinguished party,

they more than atoned for by the value they gave in return. The sacred edifice became an ecclesiastical raree show. Such a day of staring had not been known since the foundation of the church. They feasted on bonnets, shawls, and mantelets. From that hour were the fashions of Churstone village revolutionized, and the *modiste* (herself present, and taking professional notes) utterly distracted by contradictory orders.

The service was performed by the ordinary incumbent, a man of mean connexions and unfashionable antecedents, who was naturally much agitated by the solemn occasion. But it was also known that a distinguished clergyman of the distinguished party would make an appeal in aid of the exhausted funds of the Society for the Support of Decayed Orphans of Second Marriages, and that the Honourable and Reverend G. C. Horns had kindly consented to perform this duty. There was great curiosity to hear this divine; for it was given out that he was almost canonized in Belgravia.

He ascends the pulpit and begins. He will not read. He had said, last night, in the heat of that most diverting game, the Stool of Repentance, that he would throw together a few ideas before going to bed. And in a sweet *orgeat* or *liqueur* voice, he utters the ideas he has thrown together, and appeals for the Society for the Support of Decayed Orphans of Second Marriages. How different from the humdrum oracles of the accustomed clergyman ! Here was indeed the Gospel as preached in London : possibly to members of the Upper House.

The Belgravian divine finished, and the society received a very substantial collection for a rustic neighbourhood. The service was concluded, and the distinguished party departed as they came. I am afraid the rustic society of Churstone was long demoralized by that visit. I am afraid, too, that Captain Munro and Viscount Codlins, who had been severally billeted among many families, and were placed beside attractive young virgins, did not bestow their minds entirely on their spiritual concerns, but proceeded to panto-

mimic signs and overtures unbecoming a place of worship. The Captain, who was a man of the world, and had seen much service, garrison and otherwise, was afterwards pleasantly rallied on his doings.

## IX.

## A NEW VISITOR.

THERE was a light brougham waiting at the little railway station near Churstone, where passengers were only set down by signal. A distinguished visitor was expected and waited for—had been expected the day before; but a telegram had come in his room, setting out an apology within twenty words. A rude raw place, frigid in point of traffic temperature, where the wandering stranger, whom chance or ill luck had brought to that portion of the earth, became lonely and dejected even to suicide. It lived, drew breath, and had its being through the Great House; and therefore, through nine months of the year, was morally dead.

Here was the day mail gliding in reluctantly, while a lazy signal-post lifts its

short white arm languidly, and keeps on pointing in a heavy unmeaning way, while the distinguished stranger descends, with coats and rugs upon his arm. And the distinguished stranger's mails are presently got out, whose superscription the whole staff of the station reads surreptitiously. Distinguished stranger and mails are then placed in the light brougham, which trundles away gaily, as if on rails too.

What are those ephemeral and airy mediums which our wise men and preachers use in their parables as illustrating the weakness of human purpose? There is piecrust for promises—water, which is cheaper than paper, and sand, for writing down vows. How plentifully garnished with piecrusts, and water, and sand, that sermon which should deal with the spectacle of our famous hero, bowling away snugly in the light brougham, making for gala and general festivity, his spirits rising with every furlong, having cut away all impeding cares and burdens, which were left packed away in a small house in Ma-

genta Road ; for the name which the porters read so surreptitiously on the mails was—— Mildrington, Esquire ; and our gallant barrister was being hurried away to where his fine intellect and brilliant fancy would have room to play and sparkle—and, what was better than all—would find an exuberant and appreciative audience. Surely there are masculine duties of suckling fools and chronicling small beer, as well as feminine, equally degrading to both sexes. And for men of true wit and intellect (of whom the world has a small enough company), to be wasting their incomparable sweetness on an atmosphere well intentioned but wholly inappreciative, was not intended in the order of nature.

Yet let no one harshly set it down that he was hurrying to his masquerade in the old conjugal domino of a brute, with all the domestic ligaments violently burst. A scene *orageux*, storm, spasm, and fierce exit of the hero. Rather he had departed with the strictest domestic honour and credit, with the colours of the household

gods flying. And it came about in the most natural way in the world.

What *could* be more natural than that our reformed barrister, now meek conjux, should one day meet with Churstone Boleyn, M.P., who should say, "God bless my soul, where *have* you been? I was thinking of you only this morning. My dear sir, you must come down to us, fix a day forthwith. Next week we shall have a few friends, and it will be tolerably lively. You *must* come to us."

And when our reformed barrister, feebly deprecating this invitation, and knowing, according to the theologians, that we must shun small occasions if we would shun deadly sins, waves off the proposal, what more natural than that, when pressed severely by his friend, he should, at last, for mere riddances of this importunity, propose that Churstone Boleyn, M.P., should "write him a line," when he was ready, and that *then* he would "see if he could get away." These perseveringly good-natured men are only to be got rid of by some such device.



What more natural, or more above-board it must be said, than that, when this despatch *does* arrive, announcing the commencement of the jubilee, Mr Mildrington, who had no secrets from that little woman of his, should bring it in to her, and with much disgust deplore the persecutions to which he was subject.

What more natural again, than that he should rejoice at his deliverance, and at the same time confess—he *must* confess—that there were advantages in the trip, for which he would be inclined to make a sacrifice. Mrs Mildrington, his parent, at her time of life requiring all a son's duty, would be there ; and the intimacy and opportunities of a country house, and let it be said, the emollient and softening character of that species of life, would be found highly favourable to the proper disclosure of that secret, on which hung the happiness of their common existence. He had thought of this precious opportunity very often at nights ; but he had resolved to wait and take his chance in the ordinary course. She would be back in, say six weeks.

Again, what could be more natural than that he should allude to the sure and certain means it would afford of forwarding his interest. Churstone Boleyn, M.P., was an important man, a man of influence. Churstone Boleyn, M.P., had spoken of Parliament. Churstone Boleyn, M.P., had local power, useful in professional direction. Churstone Boleyn, M.P., had wished for his aid in a Parliamentary direction, and would pay his small service tenfold. Yet all these things would he handsomely sacrifice, rather than cause anxiety to that little lady. Let us say no more about it, dismiss the subject, we will write by to-night's post—that is to say, by to-morrow's post—declining Churstone Boleyn's kindness, in firm, but grateful language.

What more natural than that the little woman, who was of a kindling heroic turn, should be so transported by this noble instance of self-abnegation in her service, that with glowing cheeks, and her whole little grateful soul kindling in her face, she should come to our splendid hero, and conjure him to take back those fixed words

of his, and go. Yes, he must, he should. For her sake, she begged it as a favour ; but the hero was not to be moved, for that night at least. But in the morning, after much wearisome importunity, at last, consents ! but, it must be understood, for a few days only. We may wonder too, had that notion of reconciliation with that great queen Mildrington, who was her unseen terror, any share in the anxiety [of the little lady.

And thus it came to be how Mildrington was sitting in the light brougham whirling on to Churstone.

Yet, though our hero was not exactly the monk he had been when sick, he *fancied* he was. This is always the way. So in his railway carriage and in his light Brougham he entertained himself with pious thoughts and wholesome resolutions. He was going purely to forward his material interests. He should hope a man at his age could trust himself. At any rate it would be a good discipline ; a useful training for the mind. Unless we fight,

and run risk of dangers, there will surely be no glory and no crown ! It was only due to that poor little worshipful soul at home !

## X.

## CHURSTONE CASTLE.

"LEAVE by three train, which sets you down at five and a half exactly, and we shall send to meet you," said Churstone Boleyn, M.P.; "drop us a line though the day before." And Mr Mildrington did drop a line the day before, and was met accordingly.

"Only three miles' good driving," added Churstone Boleyn, "and there you are." These three miles' good driving were spent in half an hour, and there Mildrington was.

A very stately place this Churstone, by a grim lake, approached through a flat tableland of a domain dotted with ancient timber. The avenue wound and meandered like a snake, and twisted itself this way and that, to avoid coming directly to the

castle, which lay directly in front, and was accessible enough. There was the old castle, a fine mass of ruins, and to which townsfolk, from the manufacturing metropolis, only ten miles off, used to drive over and hold tumultuous picnics. The modern residence formed a huge hollow square, and might have been deemed sufficiently imposing. But when Churstone Boleyn, M.P., came to his kingdom he lifted the great building sluice, and turned on a flood of masons. He must glorify himself in brick and mortar. The place became peopled with the stone-cutters; and the melodious clink of rock, being trimmed and chipped, rang out musically on the ear. By and by, within eighteen months or so, a grand mass of square stone towers and gables and abutments have been fitted on to one end of the open square, and there it reared itself an imposing pile, with a family flag flying, and the ends of the arches, where arches were, carved into quaint heads, drawn from the family armorial devices. The older portion and the new thus fused together made

an agreeable rococo mixture. Round about the ground unfolded itself in prime flat beds and broad walks of the old pattern, and through judicious openings in the planting were to be found choice views of the quiet lake. On the whole, Churstone Boleyn, M.P., was justified in the overgrown pride, possibly affection, that he took in this fine place, and might be pardoned for his natural self-glorification in its grandeur.

At a sort of church porch, projecting from the tower, lit with stained glass windows of warm yellow, on which were displayed devices of hospitable omen, such as, "~~Welcomz~~ y<sup>e</sup> coming; ~~speedz~~ y<sup>e</sup> partinge guest," Mr Mildrington was set down; the door-bell was pulled, and pealed out with loud clang. Menials came and flung the door open, and he stood within the hall—oaken-panelled, carved, and its table heaped with that wondrous miscellany of cloaks, coats, hats, in genera and species, exhaustive of the whole category of hats, whips, sticks, shawls, bonnets, and what not. A long corridor crosses the hall, and

laughing figures, in great spirits, flit by, having first surveyed the stranger a moment. Presently Churstone Boleyn, M.P., sent for by express, comes from his study in all his stiffness and majesty, and gives Mildrington a rigid welcome. For part of this buckram manner was territorial, left always down at Churstone, entailed, as it were, with the property. This he resumed cheerfully on his return, and became like the unhappy young prince, whose story is to be found in the "Arabian Nights," entirely stone—not merely from the legs downwards, but in all the upper part of his person.

"You would like to see your room?" said the host, putting the traditional interrogatory. Every newly arrived guest is supposed to be greedily thirsting to see his chamber; and Mildrington was led away by menials to a charming cell in the tower, decorated in pale sea-green and gold, furnished with Gothic oaken furniture. A charming chamber, indeed—fresh, bright ("We are a little in the rough here," Churstone Boleyn said, with



the humility of true pride), and with a view of the slopes, and the prim gardens, and the spreading prairies of the demesne, and the old low-trunked timber, dotted here and there as sentries, and a snatch of the leaden-toned lake in the opening.

## XI.

### THE COMPANY.

AT dinner time Mildrington was absorbed quietly into the ranks of the guests—some one was so absorbed every day. To three or four he was made known personally by Churstone Boleyn, with all the stately procedure of introduction, Churstone Boleyn doing the Lord Chamberlain's office very conspicuously and with much pomp. The guests looked at him with curiosity; which was not surprising, considering that the host had been singing, "Arms and the man," that is, the legal arms and the legal man, for the week previous. "A singularly intelligent person," he said, from the head of the table. "Expect him to-morrow—young man of extraordinary ability. Really the way he put the case to His Honour the Master of the Rolls

(he liked the ring of these titles)—the light he put the thing in—was—hum—really quite—h'm—quite curious. It surprised me, I assure."

One or two Mr Mildrington knew already. Viscount Hartletop, M.P., "had the pleasure of meeting Mr Mildrington before." To Sir Charles and Lady Penguin he was introduced with the proper solemnities. All were not yet assembled, but were dropping in one by one, resplendent in low necks, and necks not low, but beautified with white ties. Every day was a state banquet, and marked with the rites of state banquets. Enters now, with a bold, short, sturdy tramp, Sir John (he had a surname, but it was so universally dropped, that it is not worth chronicling here), that brave baronet, who might be called old, indeed, if you took to vulgar totting of years—so far as eighty or so, but who was, in truth, young in heart, young in soul, young in intellect, and above all, young in body. Younger than the youngest, his cheeks were of warm pink—unwrinkled, and bore the generous

glow of health ; his eyes bright ; and that very day he had been striding through the covers many miles, gun on arm, and to his own share had brought down as many birds as two youths (steady shots also) who had gone out with him. Here he was now, tramping in sturdily after his day's sport, fresh, bright, gay, ready for what the evening might bring. Welcome almost affectionate greets him. Delightful is it to see this practical reversal of Nature's steady law, and usually fatal advance, by the agency of Temperance, and good heart, and an indomitable spirit.

More ladies fluttered in, and finally came a rustle, which someway sounded in a key of familiar music to Mildrington. He thought at that moment of his spiritual retreat in the light Brougham, and of those spiritual arms with which he had fortified himself. Let us at least be just and give this poor fighting soul credit for good purposes and intentions. Most likely he will do his duty if he can. Alas ! he does not see the looks interchanged among the woman portion of the community.

They are all in the secret, and are innocently digging pitfalls to engulf the poor pilgrim. It seems all a plot. How in the wide world shall he escape ?

However, here is Miss Boleyn passing quite close, and saying with some warmth, "How do you do, Mr Mildrington ? Welcome to our ancestral halls !"

And he replies carelessly, "What ! you here, Miss Boleyn ?"

This, though based on a fiction, was not so bad for a beginning. Courage ! Our hero may be a true monk yet !

END OF VOL. I.









